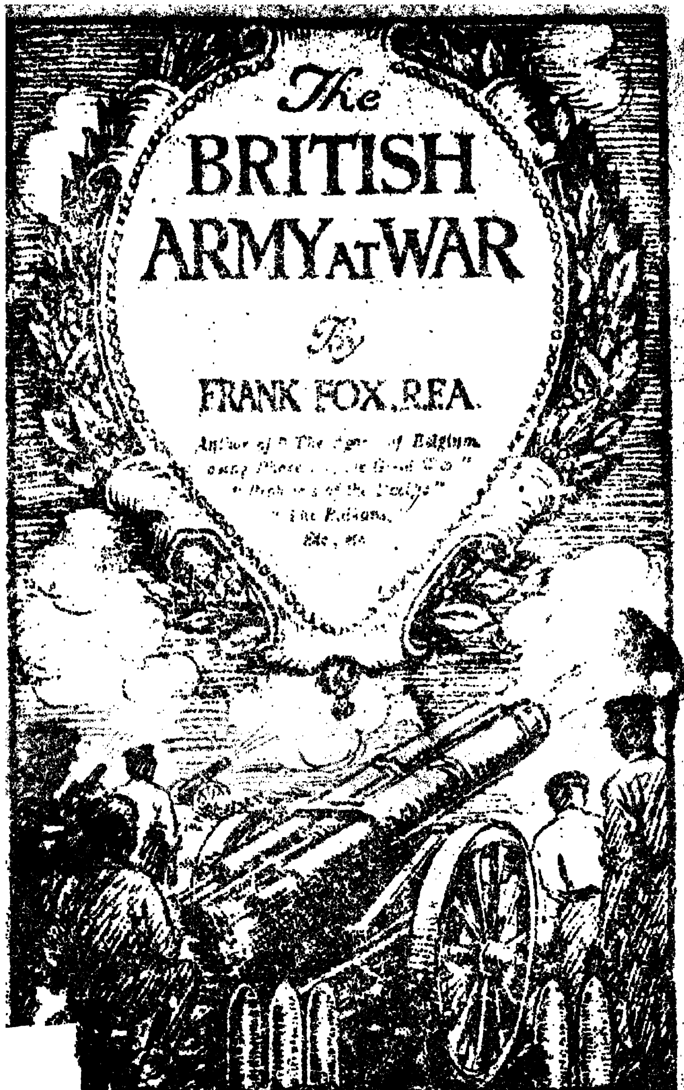
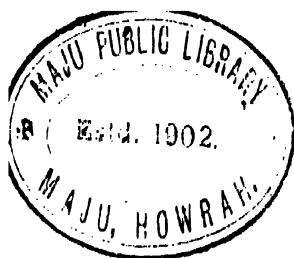
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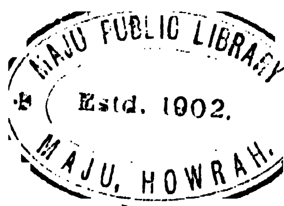
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THE BRITISH ARMY AT WAR

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BY

FRANK FOX, R.F.A.

Author of
" The Agony of Belgium, being Phase I of the Great War";
" Problems of the Pacific";
" The Balkans";
Etc., Etc.

With Illustrations and Maps.

T. FISHER UNWIN, LTD.,
1, ADELPHI TERRACE, LONDON.
1917.

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FOREWORD

IT is not the purpose of this book to give a detailed account of any one of the series of campaigns in which the British Army is engaged during this world war; but rather a general impression of the extent and variety of that Army's energies.

The work of our gallant Allies is left without mention, not because it is ignored in the mind of the writer but because it would be quite another task to set it in its true perspective—a task outside the limits of this slight sketch of the work of the British Army.

When any incident is described in detail as an illustration of a general statement, it is usually from personal experience as a combatant.

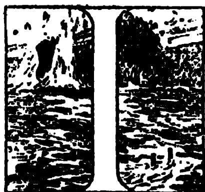
THE AUTHOR.

July 1, 1917.

THE BRITISH ARMY AT WAR

CHAPTER I.

A FAR-FLUNG BATTLE LINE.



N August 1914, the German army in order to invade France violated the neutrality of Belgium in defiance of a treaty to which the German Emperor was a party. The British Army was mobilized and crossed the Channel to stand by the side of the French and Belgians. Its strength was 100,000 men. Its task was to act with its allies against a German army that is calculated to have numbered then 2,250,000 men. The aid it gave was magnificent: in the opinion of many it was vital in staying the first rush of the enemy. But it was certainly a "little army" compared with the numbers opposed to it, though not "contemptible."

In June 1917, according to a German estimate, which need not be questioned, the British Army mobilized a very great army for an attack (secondary

to the main attack of the then continuing battle of Arras) on the seven mile front of Messines Ridge.

Thus within the space of three years the British Army in France had grown from a total force of 100,000 men to a force so great that, whilst manning the trenches from the Somme almost to the Belgian Coast, and whilst carrying on the great Battle of Arras, it could muster another army for another attack.

The war still being waged, there is an objection, which will be at once understood by the reader, to giving figures which would be useful to the enemy. The total of the British Expeditionary Force in France may not be stated. But the German statement of the strength of our mobilization for the Messines attack is near enough to essential accuracy—if there were not 200,000 men of ours, as they said, it seemed to the Germans that there were—and will give a striking enough impression of the growth of the British force in France. From a grand total of 100,000 to a muster of about 200,000 for a local attack is growth indeed.

If a comparison were made in gun-power—and this world-war is primarily an artillery war—it would be found that whilst the whole British Army of August 1914 had perhaps 400 guns, of which about 50 were of heavier calibre than field guns, the British force mobilized for the local Messines attack would have at least double this amount of guns, of which

one quarter would be of heavier calibre than field guns; and of these the majority would be heavier than any guns brought into the field before 1914. A heavy piece in 1914 meant usually a 4.7-inch gun or a 6-inch howitzer. In 1917 a heavy gun had come to mean something going up to a 12-inch gun and a 15-inch howitzer.*

If the comparison were carried farther, to bring all war material within its range, the total equipment of the whole British Army of August 1914 would show very poorly beside that of the detachment of the British Army which in June 1917 undertook a secondary operation on the left wing of *one* field of operations. In aeroplanes and observation balloons; in mines and mining gear; in hand grenades and trench mortars; in medical and transport equipment, the growth had been at the fabulous

* It is necessary to distinguish between the two classes of cannons, "guns" and "howitzers"; the gun a low-trajectory, high-velocity piece; the howitzer a high-trajectory, low-velocity piece. Comparing the field pieces of the British Army, the 18-pounder gun and the 4.5 howitzer have about the same degree of mobility: both take up the recoil of firing with about the same completeness. But whilst the gun fires an 18-pound shell, the howitzer fires a 35-pound shell. The gun is more accurate, the flight of its shell swifter, its range greater. The advantages of the howitzer are that with the same degree of mobility the army commander can get about double the weight of shell thrown, and by varying the propulsive charge in the howitzer a varying height of trajectory can be obtained, and therefore a varying angle of descent. The howitzer can drop shells almost perpendicularly, even on near objectives.

pace of Jack's bean-stalk; and one completely new fighting arm had appeared on the British side—the "Tank," a movable fort on "caterpillar" wheels that tramples down a foe by sheer weight like the armoured elephants of the early Roman-Punic wars.

Look back upon the little British Army which in 1914 took rank alongside the French by Mons, and fell back fighting until the rally of the Marne; and then narrow the vision to see to-day, not the whole British Army, but only that detachment of the British Army in France marching out by the Lys to take the fortified Messines Ridge. The growth shows as marvellous and especially so to those who understand how an army in the field is comparable to an iceberg at sea, of which the greater part is unseen. For every rifleman in the trenches and gunner in the gun-pits there are at least three other people working to keep him supplied with food, clothing, ammunition, communications. So an army's growth demands a growth behind the line three times as great as that in the line. And this growth is not merely a matter of the multiplication of riflemen and gunners and auxiliaries; a heaping up of men. It must be an organic growth to be effective at all: an adding one by one of highly complex and yet homogeneous units. A "Division" is the integral unit of any Army, and a Division must have in the field its infantry battalions, cavalry or cyclist companies, field batteries, signallers (with "wireless," telephone and

telegraph services), engineers, transport and supply services, medical and ambulance services. All told it numbers about 20,000 men. But it is not a mob, nor a crowd, nor yet even a simple organization such as a band of factory employees. It is a nation in microcosm, its constituent numbers covering almost the whole of the activities of life. It must be organised to fight, to keep up communications, to manufacture and repair, to feed itself and its horses, to keep good health conditions in its camps and to succour its sick and wounded. Besides fighting men it has doctors, vets, sanitary engineers, mechanics of all kinds, chemists, electricians. Behind the line the Division's supports, its munition and clothing factories, its food providers, must be organized just as carefully.

Divisions as they multiply are organised into Corps, Corps into "Armies," and the "Armies" together are the force in the Field. It was the task of one British Army to take Messines whilst the other British Armies in the French field of operations carried on with the Battle of Arras and did their share to hold against German infestion the ground behind the line of trenches which runs like an open wound over the body of France and Belgium.

One of the wonders of history indeed, the growth from the British Army which fought at Mons in August 1914 to the British Army which fought on the Lys in June 1917. But that Lys Army was only a fraction

of the British Force in France, and the British Force in France is only a part of the British Army which holds a field to-day as wide almost as the world itself. On every continent are its fighting forces. On two continents—America, which the Monroe doctrine and the British Navy kept from the contamination of any German settlement; and Australia, which is wholly British—the British Army is represented only by reserves and soldiers in training. On every other continent it carries on active warfare and stands guard over territories which it has wrested from the German.

During the three years of war the British Army has confronted Germany on a section of the Belgian-French front with a force ever growing in numbers and efficiency of equipment until it has reached a stage at which its superiority is admitted by the Germans themselves, who are reduced to a desperate defensive behind their fortifications. The British Army has done the main work in sweeping away the whole of the German Colonial Empire, except a remnant of German East Africa which is still held by the Germans on a precarious weekly tenure. The British Army has fought the allies of Germany in Egypt, the Saharan Desert, Palestine, Syria, Arabia, Persia, Mesopotamia, the Balkan Peninsula and on the Indian frontier. Further, the British Army has aided to a greater or less extent the Belgian Army, the Italian Army, the Serbian Army, the Roumanian

Army, the Russian Army, and the Japanese Army in their various tasks.

That is the record in barest outline of the military achievement of a nation which was not a military but a naval nation at the beginning of the war ; and which had to create an Army whilst it kept with its Navy all the sea paths open. Calculate the total line along which the British forces have operated since the outbreak of the war, in Europe, Asia, Africa and Polynesia, and it would girdle half the earth ; and the total area won from the Germans in West Africa, South West Africa, East Africa and Polynesia and from the Turks in Mesopotamia and Syria far exceeds the total area of Germany and Austria combined.

The width of the recruiting field of the British Army has been as impressive as the width of its fighting field. There is not an islet of the whole British Empire which has not contributed its share. From the great self-governing Dominions, Canada, Australia, South Africa, New Zealand, Newfoundland, from all the Crown Colonies, the best of the manhood came to swell the flowing tide. Wherever were British men in exile, steps were turned homeward. From the pampas of the Argentine the British rode to the coast and the sea brought them to their Mother's side ; British clerks in Chinese counting houses put down their pens ; pearl fishers in the East Indies, stevedores trading in the Pacific Islands,

left their ships; miners from Amazon valleys gave up the dream of riches to respond to the call. It was calculated that about 5,000,000 men had been enrolled as volunteers in the British Army before the vastness of the task and the aspiration for a just division of the sacrifices of war made it necessary to compel service in parts of the British Empire.

Nothing can be made without mistakes and in the carrying out of this giant task of making the Army of the British Empire there were many mistakes of detail. It is in the nature of the human mind to see such mistakes in high relief, as the human eye sees small patches of stone stand out from a vast field of snow. But, making the worst that can be made of the mistakes, if they are seen in proper perspective they cannot blur the dazzling brilliance of a marvellous achievement.

Most of the mistakes, moreover, were direct consequences of that innocence of warlike intention and that passion for human right and liberty which was common to Great Britain as to the rest of Western Europe and on which, clearly, the German Powers had counted as sufficient to paralyse effective resistance to their deliberate and designed preparation. Hindering, those good qualities of peacefulness proved to be, but not paralysing. After all, the task was done. That most dangerous first rush of German militarism was stayed. The powerful beast was kept within bounds whilst weapons were forged for



British Soldiers in a French Village. p. 16



General Lord French.
From the drawing by Francis Dodd.

p. 17

his destruction. In vain were all his mighty efforts, backed by the skill of half a century of preparation and Spartan discipline.

As the third anniversary of the war approaches it becomes clearer that a German victory is impossible, and that mankind will be able to return to an era of humane and peaceful civilisation. In achieving this result the British Army has taken its full share. As a little army it sacrificed itself proudly; as a preparing army it waited patiently: as a great army it now marches soberly and confidently to take part in the common victory.

Chapter II.

HOLDING THE FIRST RUSH.

(August 1914 to October, 1914)



HE German military party (and that was practically all Germany) profited by the obstinate optimism of the other European peoples to bring their preparations for the onslaught upon Europe in 1914 to the point which represented perfection in the view of their army commanders. In other countries statesmen simply would not believe that Germany, prospering vastly as she was in peace, able to win extreme diplomatic concessions by the inexpensive means of bluster, in possession of a vast Colonial Empire and on the point of getting a great sphere of influence in Asia, could ever contemplate war. Even when a great German war loan was raised, and when a system of training the old and the decrepit to take on the work of agriculture in war time was set up in Germany, Europe still refused to believe that the catastrophe of universal war immediately threatened civilisation. But German militarism was resolute. It had come to believe

in war not as a necessary evil or as a last resort but as good in itself and a wholesome exercise for a growing nation.

In August 1914 therefore, having neatly arranged that Austria-Hungary (which was not ready and did not wish for a European war) should be first involved irremediably, Germany made her rush. Her plan was to roll France in the dust and then humble Russia; Great Britain would the while be cajoled into neutrality. To secure the speedy despatch of France it was necessary, the Germans thought, that an overwhelming force should be flung at her along a wide front. A passage direct into France through one of the strategic defiles between fortress systems seemd to threaten dangerous delays. So it was arranged that Belgium and Luxembourg were to be used as a field of development. Resistance on the part of Belgium was not anticipated, and the Belgian fortress system in any case was not of great strength. It had been designed on a plan to withstand invasion from France as well as invasion from Germany—that being Belgium's clear idea of her duty as a neutral state whose independence was guaranteed by both Germany and France; so such strength as the Belgian defence preparation had was halved as against Germany.

An early success against France was very important to the German plan of conquering Europe. France, she calculated, must be crushed before the

vast masses of Russia could be brought into full action. When Great Britain decided that she could not regard the treaty guaranteeing the independence of Belgium (to which she with Germany and France was a party) as "a scrap of paper" and declared war on Germany, the necessity to that country of an early success against France became absolutely vital. Historically, Great Britain had always been slow to move in a European war, but of great weight usually when she did move. Her participation, too, closed the seas to Germany. It was seen in August, 1914, by students of war that if Germany could not win a decisive result against France within a very short time she had no human chance of ultimate victory. Staying the first German rush became thus a matter of the greatest importance.

Those who argue that the British military effort would have been more wisely directed if, in the first stage of the war, the British Expeditionary Force had been kept at home and used as the nucleus for training a great continental army, ignore the pressing circumstances of August 1914. Undoubtedly in that way a great British Army could have been far more quickly raised. Undoubtedly, too, the task of forming the new British Army was very seriously handicapped by the draining away to France of practically all the fully trained men of military age in Great Britain. But with a choice of two courses Great Britain took the more daring and the more generous

one: and that in human affairs is generally the better one. The material help which the Five Divisions of the British Army gave to the French was not negligible. The moral help was much greater. The lack of those Divisions might have lost Paris to the French and left the Germans in control of all France north and east of the Seine; and that event might have ended the war—it would certainly have prejudiced seriously the French recovery.

The risk taken by Great Britain in stripping her own territory of its only efficient army was not inconsiderable. Direct attack by Germany was seriously feared then. A bolder German naval policy, indeed, might have secured an invasion of England. Plans were drawn up at one time on the supposition of a German descent on our coasts being actually imminent, plans which involved a great sacrifice of British homes. But in the councils of the nation courage prevailed. Confidence was felt in the Navy that a serious invasion of British home territory would be prevented.

On August 3rd in response to the appeal of King Albert of Belgium, the British Navy and Army were mobilized and an ultimatum sent to Germany demanding a withdrawal from Belgium. On August 4th war was declared. Embarkation of the Army was begun on August 7th, and on August 9th the first British troops landed in France.

Their welcome was fervent. The majority of the

French people, probably, had given up the hope of direct British assistance against Germany. Even with the British declaration of war they doubted whether Britain could or would send troops across the Channel. Full conviction came with the landing at the Channel ports of these khaki-clad troops, perfect in equipment, magnificent in physique and moral, the picked men of a professional army that (as regards rank and file and junior officers at least) were as confident of a complete and speedy victory over "Fritz" as they would have been in going out to meet an Indian frontier tribe or an African Mahdi. All old doubts and misgivings of the English were swept away in a flood of joyous emotion. The French people felt not only that aid had come but that the aid was certain to be effective. The soldiers were acclaimed as heroes and were loaded with gifts. French matrons stripped off their trinkets, even to their rings, to throw them at the passing British soldiers.

That mood of exaltation could not survive the bitter realities of a three-years' war in which the normal human happiness and cheerfulness of Europe were trodden in the dust. But with three years' experience and knowledge of the millions of British soldiers from time to time quartered upon them, the French people keep unchanged—and have had the best of reasons to keep unchanged—their respect and liking for the British "Tommy." He has proved

himself stalwart in the trench and gentle in the village. The Germans have sought to persuade the French that Great Britain having "invaded" France with so many soldiers intends to keep the Pas de Calais. The French know so well, are so scornful of any attack on, British good faith that they joke on the subject. A British General at a base camp on the coast of France was showing to a French General the arrangements for the comfort of the men, including some fine baths constructed of cement.

"Ah, tres solide!" commented the French General with a smile. It was his playful reference to the German fiction then current.

On August 23rd the British Army's participation in the Great War began with the Battle of Mons. Three weeks had passed since the German force had crossed the Belgian frontier. First at Liege, and afterwards on the front Haelen—Tirlemont—Namur, the tiny Belgian army had held up the development of the German mass. The best part of one of the vital months had gone and the German need for an overwhelming victory over France had become desperate. It appears clear from the knowledge available now (and with every addition to the sum of that knowledge it has appeared more clear) that but for the presence of the British Force, small as it was, that victory would have been won. For as it was the position was only saved by a hair's breadth.

There is a legend that the German military plan from the Battle of Mons to the Battle of the Marne was prejudiced by the "political" consideration of a desire to crush the British Army out of existence: that to the attack upon the British detachment were devoted forces and energies out of proportion to its military importance. A part, though not an essential part, of this legend is the story of the Kaiser's reference to the "contemptible little army" of Britain. Perhaps the truth of this legend will be established at the end of the war if there is a full disclosure of events from the German side. It is not unreasonable in itself, for the presence of the Kaiser with the German Army, and the presence of his sons, has without a doubt interfered often with the military dispositions of his generals. In an earlier campaign (that of Napoleon against Russia in 1812) a condition precedent to the ultimate Russian success was that the Czar Alexander should leave his army to its commanders, because he could not act as General-in-Chief himself, and whilst he was with the Army no one else could. The German Kaiser's emotional hatred of the British might well have led to an unbalanced effort against Sir John French's force.

But whether the British army was hunted as a matter of spite or wholly because it had the post where necessarily the chief brunt of the attack must fall, certain it is that the experience of the First

Five Divisions was such as to test to the utmost their soldierly qualities. The French plan was to push up as strong an army as possible to the line Namur—Charleroi—Mons and to fight there a detaining action whilst their main forces took up a line covering Paris. The German plan was to roll up the French left and uncover the road to Paris. The British Army as it disembarked at the French Channel ports was rushed up to the left flank of the Allied Force. There was no chance of effective reconnaissance, no chance of establishing a good *liaison* with the French Command. The British troops passed from the transports to the trains, from the trains to the battlefield. Indeed one Division, the Fourth, was not present at the opening of the Mons battle but took rank at Le Cateau during its progress.

The British Army had barely arrived in front of Mons before it received orders to retire. Namur had fallen with unexpected suddenness; the fictions which had been circulated (with the best of intentions) about the resistance of Liege had created false hopes regarding Namur. The French were retiring their line before an overwhelming German attack. To conform to a very rapid retirement is never an easy matter. To fight meanwhile a rearguard action with an enemy immensely superior in numbers and overwhelmingly superior in artillery makes it no more easy. The whole of the Allied Army in the

Battle of Mons entrusted with the task of the retaining action found itself engaged in a forlorn hope. Its left wing, the British Force, which had to meet the chief brunt of the German attack, and at the same time to retire far more quickly than the rest of the line to avoid envelopment, was in the most forlorn position of all. It had not merely to retire but to run; and to fight as it ran.

The run never became a rout. As the British fell back they took heavy toll of the enemy. The gunners kept up to the full a glorious tradition and sacrificed themselves freely to help the infantry. Sir John French resisted the temptation of throwing his force into the fortress of Maubeuge, which would have given him some respite, but would almost certainly have involved an ultimate surrender. Retiring and fighting, the British Army kept in the field, kept rank, kept such a striking power that the Germans could never get to pursuit tactics; until the night of Aug. 28th, when the German advance slowed down and the Allied Force won a breathing space. It had been rushed all over the ring, knocked against the ropes, had suffered a gruelling punishment, but Round I. was over without a knock-out. The worst of the fight was over.

Counting up the grave British losses from August 23rd to August 29th, some of the critics have pointed out how much more scientific it would have been

if the British force had not rushed up to Mons but had deployed on the Marne to help to meet the German attack in its second stage. But somebody had to be at Mons. Presumably the French Command had done the utmost of which it was capable on that line, and the absence of the British would have meant that a force, which just escaped disaster as it was, would have been less by 100,000 men and would have had no chance of success at all. Mons cost dearly, it is true. But it saved Paris. Probably there were contemporary criticisms of the terrible losses at Thermopylae.

On August 29th the British Force no longer held the left flank, that post of extreme danger being taken over by the 6th French Army. On September 3rd the Allied Forces had fallen back to, and held, the line of the Marne, stretching roughly from the fortress of Paris on the left to the fortress of Verdun on the right. The British Force was directly in front of Paris. All France north of the capital seemed to be lost to the enemy, the ports of Normandy as well as the ports of Pas de Calais. British hospitals which were being established at Rouen were evacuated. The French government left Paris for Bordeaux. As Round II. began the position seemed desperate and the fight on the point of ending.

But the heroic effort of the British and French forces which had met the first shock of Namur—Charleroi—Mons had as a matter of fact, actually

succeeded. The German was "winded" (to keep up the figure of the prize-ring). His hurricane effort had failed to win a knock-out. In Round II. all the fighting was to go against him, and the conclusion of the round (i.e., the Battle of the Marne) was to see him forced to abandon the ring and to take shelter in the cellar.

The Battle of the Marne opened on September 6th, 1914. The British Force played in it a worthy but not a leading part. It was very wonderful that it could play any part at all, could show itself still an Army in being. Its task was to engage frontally the German right whilst the French Sixth Army on the British left made an enveloping attack on the extreme German right. The French Commander-in-Chief, General Joffre, and General French had met on the previous day and had agreed upon this disposition. This plan, aiming to crumple up the German right, was not the only thing in the mind of the Allied Command. The victory of the Marne was in a great measure due to General Foch's attack on the German centre, where it had been weakened to meet the threat on the German right. But the events on the left were vital to the triumph of the Marne.

From August 23rd until September 5th the French-British forces had retreated from Mons to the Marne. On September 7th the German retreat from the Marne began and continued until September

13th, when the line of the Aisne was reached. The Battle of the Aisne lapsed on September 19th into the war of the trenches. Attack and counter-attack marked the Battle of the Aisne, and both in the offensive and defensive the British Army, now full of delight of battle after a week of German-chasing, took its share. Extreme efforts had been made to re-establish its numerical strength, and they had succeeded in a measure.

Meanwhile a despairing call for help had come to the British Army from another quarter. During the Battle of the Marne the Belgians had made a gallant sortie from Antwerp, had driven the Germans back almost to Louvain and had gravely embarrassed the German campaign in France. Now that Round 2 had ended with the respite for the German army on the entrenched line of the Aisne, the German Command decided to finish the Belgian Army. An attack in force was made upon Antwerp and in response to Belgian calls for help the British Government sent what was called "The Naval Division" to assist the city. It was not a Division but a small force of trained Marines assisted by a number of levies just recruited for a contemplated "Naval Division." It was exclusively an infantry force though some naval guns had previously gone to the aid of Antwerp.

Perhaps no single action of the war has been more severely criticised than this British expedition to

the aid of Antwerp. It was necessarily inefficacious as the fortress was, militarily speaking, lost before the "Naval Division" arrived. But it can be said of it at least that its purpose was generous and its men, trained and untrained, showed the highest personal courage.

Antwerp fell and the German command decided, it is clear enough, that a line Calais—Arras—Verdun would be the proper one on which to draw up, for peace negotiations or for a renewal of the attack upon France, as circumstances dictated. The rush for Paris had failed. The rush for the sea followed as a means of securing a line threatening both Paris and the English coast.

The remnant of the British detachment in Antwerp, falling back with the Belgian army, co-operated in checking the rate of the German advance. Another British force, collected in some semi-miraculous manner, was landed on the Belgian coast and pushed forward to give what aid it could. Meanwhile from the main Army of the Allies the British force was being moved around again to the left flank. Finally the German was held down to a line in front of Nieuport, Ypres, Armentieres, Arras, Albert, Rheims, Verdun; and the war of the trenches began.

During August and September this effort on the French-Belgian front did not represent the total work of the British Army. Before August had ended

the German Overseas Empire had begun to pass into British keeping under the attacks of British forces. But it will be convenient to keep this sketch of the British military effort within separate compartments, and to complete the story of the campaign on the Western front before turning attention elsewhere.

CHAPTER III.

HOLDING ON.

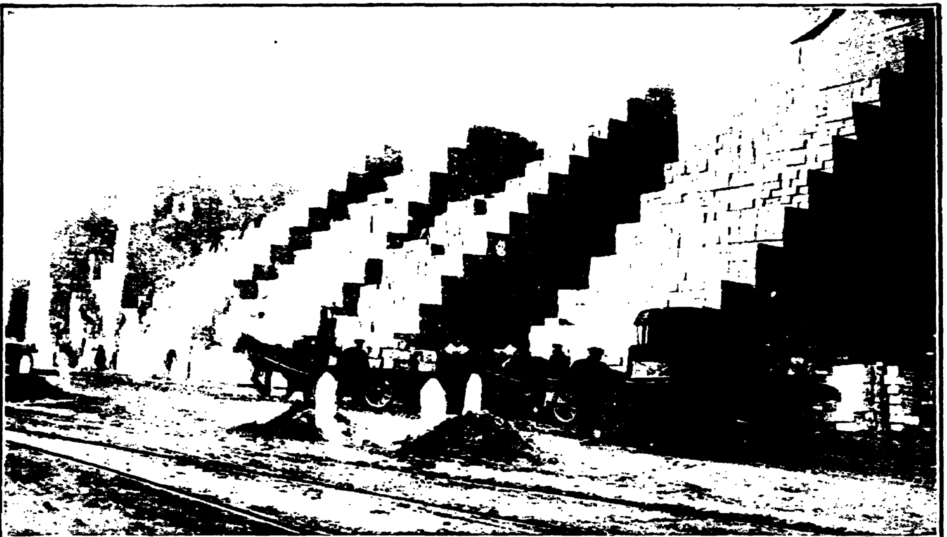
(OCTOBER 1914 to SEPTEMBER 1915).



T is hardly endurable even now in safe retrospection, to think on the position of Great Britain at home or in the field from October 1914 to September 1915. It was that of an unsuspecting man before whose feet suddenly a pit of destruction opens. He falls scrambling, struggling, down and at last reaches a little ledge which gives a momentary safety. But it is still a desperate task merely to hang on. Far up, remote almost as a star, shines safety. Below are his friends of civilised Europe, all worse situated than himself, some at the point of complete destruction. From above a fierce storm of missiles rains on his beaten head. From below come appeals for help. To hold on to his little ledge, to help the friends below, to climb up and throttle the foe above, he has all these to do, and little time to think before he acts. Hardly endurable, yet necessary to think over, so that the greatness of the danger into which



POISON-GAS DRILL. p. 32



STORES: FOOD DUMP AT THE FRONT

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the world was plunged by German militarism can be gauged, and the greatness of the task which Great Britain faced can be estimated.

So far as the nation at large was concerned, it was a time of desperate shifts and expedients. The lame and the halt and the blind who had fallen out of the Regular ranks in olden days came back to train recruits for the new armies. A great new industry of munition-making was founded. It had to make its machines and its tools before it could make guns and shell. Early progress was thus slow. So far as the army in the field was concerned it held on against heavy odds and with the scantiest supply of shell to answer the well-supplied German Artillery. Whilst the Germans could send a deluge of shells over we could reply with a bare sprinkle. And during the first few months the War of the Trenches was marked by desperate German assaults.

For the Germans were not content in October 1914 with the trench line which denied them the French Channel ports. There is good evidence that they had come to the conclusion that their best hope of victory now rested in an invasion of England. They calculated that the plan of training a new British Army had been irretrievably compromised by the heavy losses which the British Regular Army had suffered, and they hoped that a descent on the English coast with a very small force would be sufficient to occupy London and end the

war. Calais was the first stage to that descent and the first Battle of Ypres began when the Germans sought to destroy the British force which barred the Calais Road. The attack was pushed with fierce energy from October 21st onwards and was answered with heroic stubbornness. The failure to occupy and hold Menin had made the holding of Ypres vital and Ypres was in a saucer-shaped salient dominated on three sides by the German Artillery. On October 27th the British line had to fall back a little, and again on October 31st. The position on that date seemed hopeless but French aid came on November 1st, and by November 17th the First Battle of Ypres had ended in a victory for the Allies in as much as they had held the road to the coast. How desperate had been the struggle the British Casualty lists showed. At one stage there was no question of reliefs. Every man practically in the British force was in the front line and men held the trenches day after day, night after night, without sleep, with little food, with no intermission from heavy shell fire.

During the course of the First Battle of Ypres the Indian troops began to arrive to help hold the British sector of the trench line farther south. Now munition supply had improved a little and winter had put some check on active operations. The two great armies locked in a life and death struggle swayed to and fro the trench line, and the soldiers'

life settled down to the comparative quiet of Trench War—"days of deadly monotony relieved by hours of deadly funk."

With early Spring, April 22nd, came another fierce attack by the Germans on the Ypres salient where now the first of the contingent from the Over-seas Dominions, a Canadian Division, had come to help hold the line. On April 24th the war took on a new phase with the German use of asphyxiating gas as a weapon. Of this odious breach of the rules of civilised warfare the Canadians were the first victims. Impatient in their diabolism, the Germans did not wait until their supply of gas was sufficient and the wind favourable for a gas attack on a great scale. Else they might have poisoned their way to the coast within a few days. As it was, only a sectional advantage was gained at the time and when the German chemists were ready with a full supply of poison gas the Allies were ready with protective masks.

The heroism of the troops who withstood this hideous and unexpected form of warfare can never be sufficiently lauded. Its recognition at the time in Great Britain took the practical form of a swift and efficacious effort to provide protection. With use by the Germans of poison gas the war took a more bitter turn and horror followed horror until the soldier of civilisation had to rise to a height of courage putting altogether in the shade that of the

Knights of old, who went out to fight loathly dragons which breathed fire and mephitic vapours. In this mortal struggle with a race of scientific orang-outangs, it requires a shutting of the eyes to externals and a looking inward to see the nimbus shining from the brow of the soldier. Not an heroic figure to outward seeming, the gas-helmeted, engoggled Crusader, enveloped in the weird protections with which Science—mournful that her noble teachings have been prostituted by the Huns—has hastened to provide him. But how more splendid than that of any beplumed, caparisoned soldier of old, is his courage as he rides, or squats in mud or dust, swathed in his chemical bandages so that all human likeness is lost, awaiting not only shot and shell and steel, but *flammenwerfer*, asphyxiating gas, lachrymatory gas, stink gas, and the other instruments of German warfare! Perhaps one day some Rodin will have the courage and skill to sculpture Poilu or Tommy thus in his war-gear. Perhaps he will succeed in showing the heroism of the soldier beneath the mask. Certainly he will not fail to show the beastliness which has forced on to the face of chivalry this hideous veil, and made war a contest of poisoners and vitriolists.

A complete exhibition of the German war outfit, beginning with the oil-sprayers and incendiary tabloids which proved so useful in the organised burning out of the Belgian towns, and ending with

the *flammenwerfer*, which is designed to spray burning oil into the eyes, and the "lachrymatory shells," which are mostly used on the villages in rear of the fighting line, and therefore find most of their victims among the civil population, should occupy one of the ante-rooms of the hall in which the peace negotiations are held. The *flammenwerfer* is designed to spray the face of the soldier with burning oil. But its intention is far more devilish than its performance. Protection against it is a very simple matter: for the spray of burning oil cannot be got to describe a curve *downwards* as a jet of water does; the spray curves upwards, and, if you "lay low" like Brer Rabbit, it passes harmlessly overhead. The poison gas clouds are discharged from cylinders when the wind is favourable, with the idea of poisoning the combatants on the other side. The German used at first chlorine; then a variety of gases such as phosgene. He is very cunning in mixing his gases. With poison gas he will send out a stink gas which is harmless though unpleasant. It goes through the helmet, brings Germany right home to the nostrils, and, if you have not been fore-warned, makes you think that your gas helmet is leaking. Take it off, though, and you are the next on the casualty list, for the poison gas gets to the lungs. Stink gas the soldier must learn to put up with.

What is satisfactory to know is that the British gas helmet gives full protection against all the poison

gases that the German is known to use or is likely to use. It has stood a test of some hours duration, in a very heavy concentration of German poison gas. True, life is not pleasant in a gas-helmet. It is, to say the least, stuffy; and the by-products of the German poison gas make strange disconcerting stinks within the helmet. But these are not dangerous.

To guard against lachrymatory shells it is necessary to have another line of defence—special goggles to protect the eyes. The chemicals in the gas helmet do not stop the lachrymatory fumes (benzyl bromide). But with goggles under the helmet or with a new type of helmet, which combines goggle protection against benzyl bromide with chemical protection against the various poison gases, one can face anything, and can come to harm only through carelessness. Of course one is uncomfortable, with burning smarting eyes, and the smell of bad eggs in a cow-byre. But one is safe and can shoot straight. All that the German has gained from his poison gas—since the first surprise attacks at Ypres—has been to make war as he wages it more beastly, and to strengthen the conviction that he and his ways must be brought to abject surrender before the world can be secure again.

Attacks, accompanied by poisonous gas clouds whenever a wind was favourable, continued on the British line during all the Spring and Summer of

1915. In the main they were held. Here and there a small gain was made by the Germans. Here and there a counter-attack on our part won something back. On the whole no change of importance was effected. Always, though, we were in the worse position because of our artillery inferiority. But that was being remedied and the trench warfare settled down slowly to almost equal conditions. It was then, during that pause of equilibrium, not very exciting nor very dangerous, but very curious; with its moments, its hours, of high emotion, of intense excitement, of crowding dangers, but its routine laborious almost to the point of tediousness. It demanded a sober and constant carefulness in detail, and, provided one watched the minutes and the winds, the twigs and the sky, had eyes, ears, and nerves always on the alert—it was reasonably safe on the average.

The times were rare when the call was for a gallant shout and a forward rush in which leadership took its most obvious and its easiest form. The hours were always when, with cool, suspicious deducting mind, the soldier watched a section of the enemy's trench, or a zone of fire, awaiting hostile attack or directing his own. Stalking and being stalked, it was interesting, absorbing, but not exciting. War seemed to have been robbed of all its fascinations by the spectacled savages who had spent half a century in the counting house, the laboratory, and the

cellar preparing to destroy the humanities of civilization. It had become a grubbing kind of business.

But it had its uncanny impressiveness. Imagine the huge ditch from the North Sea to the Swiss Lakes which was the French-British trench, facing another ditch which was the German trench, all lined with eyes, thousands, aye, millions of eyes. All day, all night, those eyes stared and stared in a scrutiny of death.

On the front edge of each ditch the eyes were thick in line; farther back in every possible post of observation were groups of eyes; and eyes soared up into the air now and again to stare into the underground secrets on the other side. There were eyes of infantry, eyes of artillery, eyes of airmen. The scrutiny never paused one moment. Let an eye blink a moment and it might mean disaster, a stealthy rush on a trench, or a flood of poisoning gas. Carefulness, tedious, monotonous carefulness, absolute punctuality, and grave attention to every detail—these became the warrior qualities.

Perhaps one may say that they were more typically German than French or British qualities. But the British Army did its long, long term of Trench War with a grim patience and a careful skill which gave away very little to the enemy. Hope and talk centred always in the great offensive that was to come. Gradually the nation was getting into its swing and Divisions multiplied, guns multiplied, shell dumps grew to mountainous size.

Holding On

On 19th September, 1915, a year after trench warfare began, word was passed around to the batteries of the British line in a phrase copied from the provision shops of London: "Ammunition is cheap to-day." Every gun pit stocked up with shell. The gates of the dumps had been opened and shell fairly poured out. Battery Commanders, who knew the days when one shell per gun per day was the limit allowed, now saw with joy thousands of shells, and as they began eagerly to fire them off, thousands more coming. On 23rd September a regular bombardment of the whole German line facing the British line began. The artillery was undertaking the preliminary work of wire-cutting and parapet pounding. The 18-pounders with shrapnel, the howitzers with high explosive, started at dawn and all through the day systematically smashed away at the Germans' defences. In the evening the Germans came out to repair the damage and were swept back by rifle and machine gun fire with occasional bursts of shrapnel. That went on for two more days. The fourth day we intensified our shell fire. All along many sections of the front the German wire was down, and the parapet of the German trench was breached. The enemy increased his artillery fire, too, attacking our trenches and searching for our observing stations and batteries, but on the whole getting the worst of the artillery duel. As evening fell on the fourth day our aeroplanes climbed the sky to survey the

German positions, and kept at their work despite frenzied fire from German aircraft guns and a feeble tentative on the part of their aviators, who mounted to fight and then decided to run away. The air reports were fairly satisfactory. Great damage, it was certain, had been done to the front line trench and to the wire entanglements of the enemy. The task for the infantry on the morrow was judged to be not an impossible one. After the day was over, it was clear that an artillery preparation which had for its main purpose a battering of the front line trench was not enough. But that had yet to be learned on 24th September, 1915.

At four o'clock on the morning of 25th September time was checked all along our front, and we stood to the guns. At 4.25 the final cannonade began. The air was filled with a sudden screaming of shell as the lash of the scourge prepared for him fell on the German. The morning was dull, but the flashes of the guns were so continuous as to give a light which was almost unbroken. It flickered, but it never failed. The earth itself quivered and shook with the repeated shocks of the guns. The air became a tattered hunted thing, torn wisps of it blown hither and thither by the constant explosions.

It was the greatest artillery bombardment in history up to that date, though nowadays so eclipsed by the records of the Somme, the Ancre and of Messines as to be remembered as a mere splutter.

Holding on

After the artillery preparation, the infantry attack, which whilst general all along the British line was intended to be pushed home only in the direction of Loos. In its first phase the infantry attack succeeded amply. Then it was held up. The Germans abandoned their front line easily enough but the second line could not be captured and that became the vital line. The Battle of Loos as it was termed gave us a victory, but an indecisive victory. Some slight betterment of our line was made: but no vital point of the German defence was breached: and the winter was now approaching.

Whilst these were the main operations of the British Army from October 1914 to September 1915, on other continents and in other parts of Europe issue had been joined with the enemy and his allies. As to these operations in Africa, Asia, Australasia, something will be said later.

CHAPTER IV.

PREPARING TO EVICT.

(SEPTEMBER 1915 to NOVEMBER 1916).



HAT the result of the battle of Loos was somewhat disappointing it would be idle to deny. In September 1914 the German offensive had been brought to a halt and for a year of wearisome waiting we had held our trenches, preparing for the move forward which would drive the invaders out of France. Loos showed that the task was to be a more severe one than had been anticipated. Disappointment but not dismay was felt. The task was to be gigantic. Well let the effort be gigantic. If necessary, as one British Statesman said, the big guns would be put by France and Great Britain wheel to wheel from the sea to Switzerland. The German would be blasted out of the land he had invaded though he had made of it, as he thought, an invincible fortress.

A great recruiting campaign culminating in the passing of an Act making military service universal

and compulsory: a renewed industrial effort to increase the supply of guns and munitions—these were the first Home results of the want of a decisive result in the Autumn, 1915, campaign. The compact to restore the independence of Belgium was solemnly renewed and the other war aims of the Allies re-asserted.

In the Army the lessons learned at Loos were conned over and applied. It was decided to wait until the following summer before the offensive was renewed, and in the meantime to train new armies, prepare new weapons, perfect the training of the old armies.

The Germans found the comfort that they might take from the fact that their line had been hardly affected by the French-British offensive of Autumn 1915, now seriously discounted by this inflexible resolution of the Allies.

In the Army Sir Douglas Haig took over the chief command from Sir John (now Lord) French, whose grand exertions since August 1914 had earned him some respite. General Sir Wm. Robertson became Chief of Staff. A policy was adopted at the front of "blooding" old and new Divisions by constant raids on the German trenches. It was sought to make "going over the top" a hobby amongst Infantry, and various Battalions competed with one another in raid results. The winter of 1915 was much enlivened by this sport. All raids had about the same

character. To describe one (carried out on the morning of December 8th, south of Armentieres) is to describe all.

Very early, a company of a West of England Regiment, entrusted with the task (without preliminary advertisement of an artillery bombardment, but with warning to the artillery who were to have a share in the good work at its second stage) one hundred and twenty strong, slipped silently over our parapet and made for the German trench. No German patrols were encountered. The first news the Germans had of our arrival was when an officer appeared over their parapet and shot down a German non-commissioned officer with his revolver. Then like a Rugby rush on the ball, the English soldiers were over the German parapet, their Colonel (who, by the way, had been begged not to go with them, but insisted) at their head, shouting gaily, cheering, shooting. The Germans would not make a fight of it. Most of them scurried away like rabbits to the communication trenches. Others threw up their hands, calling out "Kamerad." A German officer who showed fight, was struck down by a loaded bomb stick—his skull crushed in. Whilst the prisoners were being secured the English company divided up. Some bombed the communication trenches, others "made hay" of the German firing trench, cutting the wires, destroying the dug-outs, looting the war material.

After twenty minutes, the allotted time, the company started back for their own trench. They had twelve prisoners, a German Maxim gun, two bags of German bombs, and some other booty. They had not sustained a casualty and had left dead in the trench a number of Germans, variously estimated at from 20 to 48. As soon as our Infantry had left the German firing trench our artillery opened fire on the German communication trenches where the fugitives had taken refuge. It was at this time, probably, that the chief slaughter of the enemy would take place. They were "rattled" and in flight. Presumably the German reserves were being rushed up, and we could hope that both parties met around about the points where we were raining high explosive and shrapnel from 16 batteries.

The Germans now, 25 minutes after our men had crossed the parapet, woke up, and their artillery began a heavy bombardment of our firing trench and communication trenches. From this fire we had three killed, mainly because some of the German prisoners became obstreperous and delayed the passing of our men at a certain point. That was practically the whole cost of the enterprise.

Not a week went by but somewhere on the line a raid was carried out. The total direct material effect was not negligible. The indirect effect was much greater for all along the line during a trying winter the German was kept on the alert, never know-

ing the locality of the next raid, never knowing when a raid would develop into something more serious.

While the Infantry were being sharpened up by these raids the Artillery was trained behind the lines in some new methods of warfare including the quick passage over trenches with guns. With the arrival of new Divisions from England seasoned Divisions were pulled out of the line to have a rest and a polishing up behind the line.

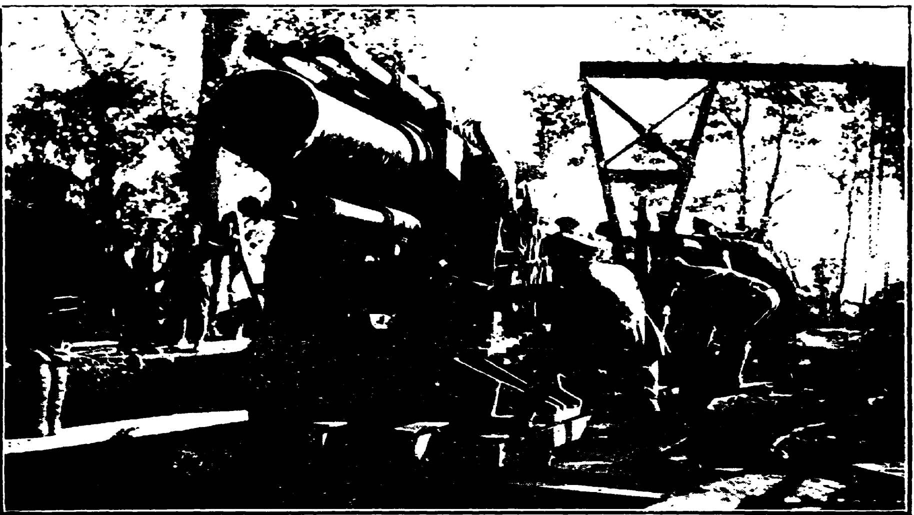
The enemy naturally knew something of what was going on. That a new offensive was being planned was obvious. Hints of British munition output reached him and made him nervous. His policy, after some hesitant searchings of the Allied line, finally settled to an attack upon the French line at Verdun. By this he hoped, evidently, either to smother the new offensive altogether or at least to bring it to a premature and ineffective explosion.

The first weeks of the great German attack on Verdun in 1916 were agonising for the British soldiers in the field. They did not know the plans that were maturing and it seemed to them something in the nature of a betrayal that the French were left without the aid of a strong counter-attack from us. But there was a perfect understanding between the British and the French High Commands: and the French public on the whole behaved magnificently. Very rarely did one hear any criticism of a position



A MINE CRATER.

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A BIG HOWITZER.

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which might have seemed to the misunderstanding mind to be that of British apathy towards France in her fiery trial.

Week followed week. The storm of battle raged against Verdun with increasing intensity, and very slowly the French were forced to give ground little by little, until at one point Verdun seemed lost. Meanwhile the British held their section of the line, raiding here and there: and behind the line massed troops and material.

On June 25th a dramatic and absolutely successful air offensive, and a great bombardment of the whole German line in front of the British positions heralded the Battle of the Somme. On July 1st the British on the North of the Somme, the French on the South attacked with Infantry on a front of 25 miles. The Artillery preparation before the Battle of Loos had made a record for this or any war. In a week there had been fired the amount of shell which pre-war forecasts would have counted sufficient for a year. Now the Somme preparation made the Loos preparation appear to have been paltry. Along the whole front of attack the field guns were brought into action at short intervals. The many hundreds of guns were like one battery. Behind the field guns were the heavy guns in such number and of such calibre that their fire more than doubled the Artillery effect of the field guns. Twelve inch guns reared their monstrous throats from the street corners of Albert.

Fifteen inch howitzers squatted in the fields around, discharging shells which exploded like mines on arrival. The trenches of the Germans were smashed; the villages held by them were reduced to heaps of dust on the countryside; and the woods were shattered into splinters.

Over a dead land sprinkled with human dead the Infantry moved to the attack. For two years all that German science and industry and cruelty could do had been done to fortify their positions. Behind the apparently impregnable fortifications which they had constructed, stretched roads and railways to bring supplies and reinforcements from the German reservoir. After the first day of attack the Germans could mobilise all their reserves to meet a blow which had had and could have had no absolute element of real surprise. But the swoop from the air had been unexpected. The intensity of the Artillery bombardment was unexpected. The enemy was first blinded then smothered with shell. Impregnableness lost its meaning and the Somme defences were breached.

Little by little during July and August the German line yielded. Of all the actions on the British section of the attack it is not possible to write, and the course of the whole battle, which raged from July 1st until the close of the year, may be best judged by giving the details of one attack. Multiply that attack by one hundred and there is the Battle of the Somme.

The action of Contalmaison opened on July 5th after Fricourt had been taken, with a preliminary skirmish to capture Horse Shoe Trench, running from Lincoln Redoubt to Scots' Redoubt, on a curved line of about 1,000 yards, some 2,000 yards south-west of Contalmaison village. The only available way into Contalmaison (which was a fort admirably supported by outposts) was between Horse Shoe Trench and Bailiff Wood. Whilst these positions were in the hands of the enemy an attacking force would have to pass for some 3,000 yards over open country with "cannons to the right of them, cannons to the left of them, cannons in front of them," and, what was more dangerous, riflemen and machine-guns also on both flanks.

To one Brigade was entrusted the attack on Horse Shoe Trench on the morning of July 5th. The Brigade won through very gallantly, but was then driven out of most of the trench by concentrated machine-gun fire. It retired to Scots' Redoubt to lick its wounds and plan another attack. This second attack must have surprised the German, for our Brigade had had a severe mauling in the morning. But it was made with a better chance of success, for in all the confusion of the battle officers and men had made some mental notes of the disposition of the enemy. These were passed on to the Artillery and enabled a very effective "preparation" to be made by the gunners. Even so, the second attack

at 6 p.m. might have failed but for the supreme valour of a young Lieutenant. An enemy machine-gun had stuck up the advance at a critical point when he went forward alone with a bag of bombs and destroyed the gun with its detachment.

We had now the right flank outpost of the Contalmaison position, and it was decided to attempt the left flank outpost and the main position in one bite the next day. The brigade that had done so well the previous day was given a rest, and two other brigades undertook the task of the day, one to capture Bailiff Wood, the other to take Contalmaison. 'The Artillery preparation was thorough, but the event proved that it had not succeeded in breaking up all the nests of machine-guns established over the German position. Both our brigades succeeded in getting to their objectives, and in each case had to fall back again under the hail of lead from the machine-guns.

" Hail of lead " is a very hard-worked and somewhat ill-used term these days. But when some scores of German machine-guns are pouring out their bullets on a threatened road the term is exact. The lead comes like hard-driven hail in a tropic storm ; you can actually see it like mist in the air. Our men fought a good fight, suffered severe losses, and then had to retire, not back to their old line, but to an advanced line from which the next assault would be easier. It speaks well for the leadership of the New

Army that in all the storm and stress two excellent advanced posts were selected and held in readiness for the next move. The move would have been made the same afternoon but that a rainstorm came to flood the land and turn the surface of the soil into slippery slimy mud. So we waited : and the German rejoiced at the success of his defence.

We waited two whole days : and then on the night of the 9th took Bailiff Wood suddenly and in the dark. A gruesome fight—hand-to-hand struggling with knife and club and bomb in a little copse, that was all broken tree and tangled wire and interlaced undergrowth above the surface, and on the surface the holes and hills of a piece of earth that had been thoroughly chewed up by heavy shells. It was not "solid ground" in any true sense, but ground in chaos, stiffened by dead bodies.

Now all was ready for the big attack. The assaulting Brigade gave up one-fourth of its strength to reserves, stationed at Scots' Redoubt, and one-fourth to a flanking attack on the left through Bailiff Wood, where it had the support of the left flank Brigade in its "holding position." The remaining half swept up to Contalmaison village from the south-west. Before the Infantry moved the Artillery "prepared the way." This meant that they flooded the village with shell—high explosive and shrapnel for a full hour. So intense was the fire that before the Infantry attack began part of the German garrison

broke from cover and were seen in flight out of the village. Better to have waited, and have left themselves the chance of becoming prisoners. Of the party in flight hardly one escaped. They were swept away by the fire of our artillery and the machine-gun fire of our Brigades in the "holding" positions right and left.

At 4.30 p.m., July 10th, the flank attack moved forward, and at 4.50 p.m. the main attack. The flank attack succeeded perfectly, moving through Bailiff Wood, dispersing the enemy, and passing to the north-west corner of the village, where in time it joined hands with the main attack. The main attack had to advance 1,500 yards in the open to reach the trench covering the village. With the steady, indomitable courage of the historic "thin red line" it went on in four successive waves. The bravery of the men was supported by the skilful dispositions of the generalship. Ranks were thin, but they could advance quickly. When wire was encountered there were no masses of men to be slain by the enemy fire, only individuals who cut the wire, fell, and made way for their mates to pass over them to victory. When the trench was reached it was by a much reduced band, the machine-gun and rifle fire of the enemy having exacted their toll. But the band was resolute and its bayonets gleamed wickedly: and the enemy fled. His own machine-guns were at once turned upon him, whilst our men

had a short "breather" before making the final assault on the village itself.

This encountered fresh obstacles such as hedges interlaced with wire, but pressed on under a scathing fire. When the assaulting force reached the village it was inferior in numbers to the German garrison, but at such close quarters superior moral told, and the enemy fled or surrendered. To one company of five officers and 160 men a German company of eight officers and 180 men surrendered.

The battle had lasted an hour when the village was taken. Almost at once German reserves came up to counter-attack. They were superior in number to the tiny British Garrison—towards which reinforcements were now being hurriedly sent up—and the situation seemed for a while critical. But our men were flushed with victory, the Germans depressed and beaten in spirit. The lieutenant, whose courage had saved another situation five days before, now organised a bombing party, which he led against the Germans, and put them to flight. Hundreds retired before a score. He met a glorious death at this the crowning moment of victory. He was a lad of the Nelson spirit, filled with a fierce impatience at the idea of any enemy withstanding a British force. A posthumous V.C. set the highest crown on his courage.

The Battle of the Somme was marked by the first appearance on the stage of "The Tanks" as Thomas

Atkins christened them. The High Command had several better names ready for these armoured forts, but in these matters Tommy is supreme. "The Tanks" they will always be, as Ypres will always be "Wipers." The first idea of the Tank was an armoured motor car with "caterpillar wheels" which could climb over the roughest land and tear up enemy wire. From that it developed into the monstrous engine that crawled about on the desolation of the Somme plateau the day we took Martinpuich, a car that could break down walls, climb over deep and wide ditches; and with offensive machine gun and other gun armament behind its steel plates.

The British Army is never consciously dramatic or I would have imagined on that September morning that the arrival of the Tanks on the front had been carefully stage-managed. The morning was dull and misty. Over the seared and terrible land little wisps of fog rose and fell. All likeness to our gentle mother earth had been battered out of the fields, which were rubbish heaps of a churned-up debris of bodies, dust, weapons, hideously pock-marked by the eruption of the shells. Where had been villages were dirtier patches of desolation. Where had been woods, groups of splintered stumps. It was an abomination of desolation, like as when the earth was first formed out of the void.

In the midst of this desolation out of the mists

came crawling uncouthly the Tanks, like prehistoric saurians.

The German forces were obviously frightened by the Tanks, which climbed over their trenches, and, impervious to rifle bullets, smashed up machine gun emplacements and redoubts. The charge that took Martinpuich, partly because of the terror inspired by the Tanks, partly because of the excellent Artillery preparation, suffered hardly any casualties.

During July, August, September, October, in detail the British Command captured key after key of the German positions on the Somme. British, Canadian and Australian troops all shared in the glory, and its price. Each victory came more easily than the preceding one. The actions of Thiepval and of Beaumont Hamel seemed to indicate an absolute disorganisation of the Germans. Winter came to save them from the full consequences of their defeat in the field. Positions which we had strategically conquered we could not occupy at the time, and thus the Germans were able to arrange a retreat to take place as soon as the frosts hardened the ground. This saved them from serious losses of men and material.

The Battle of the Somme is regarded by some as having come to an end on November 18th, 1916. It had not set the Germans in full flight to the Rhine. But it had proved their defences vulnerable, and their strategic position on the Western front hopeless.

The British Army at War

With one more month of fine weather the German defeat would have been accentuated, but they found shelter behind a morass of Somme mud which made movement practically impossible.

CHAPTER V.

THE GERMAN LINE CRUMBLING.

(NOVEMBER 1916 TO JULY 1917).



TO be optimistic is a soldier's duty at the front; perhaps almost as clearly as it is the duty of the staff and the statesmen at the base to be, if not exactly pessimistic, at any rate reluctant to take the cheerful view. One would not give a fig for the officer in the field who does not, whatever the circumstances, feel confident in ultimate victory, a victory in which he and his men will have a share. But those wise people at the ultimate head of affairs—they should always be preparing for the worst event even when most strongly they hope for the best. The most cautious possible view is the soundest for them. That lesson seemed to have been learned thoroughly in Great Britain judging by the attitude of her rulers in the winter of 1916. So soundly cautious an estimate had been made of the future that when in the Spring of 1917 the bitter disappointment came of a

temporary immobilisation for attack of the Russian Army, it necessitated no "panic measures" and did not give rise to any spirit of temporising. Perhaps no single fact could more effectively illustrate the strength to which the British Army had attained than that.

Truly in the Winter of 1916 it appeared that the German line was quickly crumbling. A dozen different signs indicated that. The German prisoner came in very easily and very cheerfully. Whether our patrols took a few, or our Army a big batch, it was the same. The German seemed glad to be caught, and after he was caught talked usually as one to whom the war had become a tedium and a task without hope. And the German soldier brought in as prisoner was not usually up to the standard of the German soldier who was brought in during earlier stages of the war.

The weakening moral of the Germans was advertised again by their new trenches. Elaborate, scientific, perfected to the last degree that time allowed, the German trenches still were; but all the care shown was for protection against attack and preparation for retreat. There was little or no provision for offensive. The trench was made to be as safe as possible and to be as easy as possible to get out of from the rear. And the Germans were afforded a good deal of practice of that sort.

All through the winter of 1916-1917 the British

force nibbled away at the German line whenever a frost or a spell of drying wind gave a firm foothold. Between the Battle of the Somme and the Battle of the Ancre, which followed it, there was really no actual pause, only a lessening of effort. In January effort on a big scale began again, the enemy being bit by bit pushed out of his positions in the Ancre Valley and the ridge beyond. Early in February Grandcourt fell. Miraumont and Serre and Pys followed and every day now brought a fresh advance. The fruits of the Somme victory made the Ancre victory easy. In March it was evident that the Germans were in retreat and air reconnaissance indicated as the place of their next stand what came to be known as the "Hindenburg Line," running S.E. from Arras to Quecant thence West of Cambrai to St. Quentin. On March 17th a general British-French advance was ordered north and south of the Somme. It encountered little resistance and a great stretch of country with the important towns of Chaulnes, Bapaume, Peronne, Nesle and Brie was wrested from the Germans. In retiring they wreaked the vengeance of a spiteful and mean-spirited enemy, carrying off the able-bodied French population to captivity, fouling the wells and destroying even the fruit trees.

In these operations the British Cavalry had its first real chance since the first months of the war. It acquitted itself well, with that mixture of caution

and daring which is the essence of good cavalry work. Following up the retreating German was not the simplest of tasks. He was falling back on a strongly prepared line and, with that to bolt to, could take big risks in counter-offensive. The terrain over which we marched had been strewn with obstacles and with mines. Every strong point had been registered by the hostile artillery. That the advance was made with such slight losses was due largely to the admirable work of the Cavalry.

At this stage the British Army was in the highest fettle. It was confident that it had "Fritz" down and under and that, whilst hard battles were yet to be fought and won, the worst of the work had been done. Fortunately the General Staff had not based its calculations on such optimism, reasonable as it seemed, for now the Allied cause was to receive a heavy blow as far as the military situation of the moment was concerned, in the political events in Russia, which for a time paralysed the Russian Army and allowed an abnormal concentration of the German strength on the Western front. The plan of a vast offensive on all fronts had to be abandoned, and whilst the French, in no way dismayed, abated not one jot of their effort and the Italians intervened with a useful attack on Austria, it is not too much to say that the chief military burden of the offensive against Germany for a time fell upon Great Britain. The British Army had grown from the position of being a small

auxiliary force of the French Army to that of being the military antagonist from which the German had most to fear.

Accepting its new responsibilities with a robust cheerfulness, the British Army took over a new section of the line in France (making its total line 86 miles and engaging, according to a French calculation, 51 German Divisions) and prepared for a Spring offensive which without a doubt surprised the Germans woefully by its vigour and suddenness. The least that the Germans had expected from the Russian position was that it would make the Western line safe; probably they had hoped to gain from it the chance of a big offensive on their own account in the West, perhaps a decisive offensive. The Battle of Arras and the Battle of Messines seem at the time of writing (July 1917) to have shattered those hopes entirely and to have destroyed even the German expectation of holding on to the Hindenberg line.

On April 9th the Battle of Arras opened with an attack upon Vimy Ridge by two British armies, the 1st and 3rd. At least that is the way of stating the position in the conventional terms of military record. But those terms demand revision to meet the circumstances of the new warfare of to-day. As a matter of fact on April 9th, before the British infantry had left their trenches, the Vimy Ridge was in great part won. As in previous British victories, a great air offensive had preceded infantry

action by many days. This had been followed by a great Artillery attack. Just as Loos had broken all records then existing of artillery effort and the Somme had made the Loos record paltry, Arras now put the Somme in the shade. On the Somme enemy villages had been destroyed and trenches knocked to pieces. On Vimy Ridge the enemy trenches were literally obliterated. It was not possible to decide where they had been when the infantry moved forward.

Vimy Ridge was taken in a single day's battle. It is the key position of the coal basin around Lens and its capture was the heaviest blow that had fallen on the German army since the Battle of the Marne. Following up the victory the British army took a whole series of villages and fortified positions; Monchy, Bailleul, Vimy village, Givenchy, Angres, Wancourt, Lievin. They were now astride the defensive position to which the Germans had fallen back after the defeat of the Somme and the Ancre. Within a space of ten days they had accomplished this and had taken the while 14,000 prisoners and some 228 guns.

Developing and extending the attack, the British Army pushed on north and south, seeking to encircle Lens and taking Gavrelle, Guemappe, Arleux, Roeux and Bullecourt. The German defence, flustered at the outset by the impetuosity of the attack, now rallied and the fighting was most bitter. The German



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A Zeppelin Brought Down in England.

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recognised that he was being attacked at a vital point and drew from the Russian front and elsewhere all the troops he could spare.

We had taken Vimy Ridge cheaply as prices go in this war. In the later stages of the Battle of Arras we got nothing cheaply. But progress continued, continues as this is written. Slowly, surely, fighting fiercely as they go, the Germans give way and hardly a day passes without a record of some success on our part in the still continuing Battle of Arras.

In June the Battle of Messines came to remind the German command that it had no guarantee of immunity from attack on other parts of the front. Besides its value in that regard the attack which captured Messines Ridge inflicted a great material blow on the enemy and must have seriously damaged his moral. Messines Ridge may be described as the German point of concentration against Calais. It was wrested from us, after fierce fighting, during the first battle of Ypres and was supposed to give the enemy Ypres and the road to Calais. The French came to the rescue, re-took Messines Ridge and lost it again in December 1914, since which date the Germans had held it without serious challenge. It did not give the Germans Ypres nor the road to Calais because the stubborn British Army refused to recognise the military impossibility of holding Ypres with the enemy dominating the ruined town from Messines; but it did give the Germans the means to inflict

constant and serious losses on our troops, and while they held it the Germans could still pretend to hope in some future successful assault which would win for them the French Channel ports and the means to compel Great Britain to peace. Now that hope has gone. Very plainly, so plainly as to make its message comprehensible to the dullest German, the Battle of Messines Ridge proclaimed that the hope of another German offensive in this war is reduced to a minimum, that the role of the German army now is the dispiriting one of holding on to positions until it suits the attack to turn them out.

An attempt to recover Messines Ridge had been contemplated by the British Army in 1916 and postponed as the time did not seem ripe. Advantage was taken of the delay to perfect preparations which in September 1916 had been so well advanced as to promise sure success. The famous mine of Messines, which was very literally to blast the German out of his position on June 7th, 1917, was then already in being, though it was afterwards extended. The German still rages and grumbles about that Messines mine. It infuriated him just as the Tank infuriated him. The one supremacy that he felt was left to him in this war was in regard to material. He might not be able to put such good men into the line, might be beaten in the matter of quick adaptable courage in the field, but his Herr Professors, he reckoned, had an invulnerable supremacy. His machines would

always be better. Now in this matter of the mine of Messines the Herr Geology Professors on the German side knew quite well that you *could* not mine to any extent around Messines. The water-logged strata would not allow of it. So Fritz could sleep easily in his trench so far as mines were concerned. But on our side there was a Geology Professor who knew better.

On the morning of June 7th the mine went up and the British infantry went over and the Battle of Messines was won. We had made a great artillery concentration and for nearly a fortnight had advertised the attack with a continuous bombardment of the enemy line. Ample time was given to the enemy to bring up his guns and his infantry to meet the blow. The only arm of the German force we did not want was the air fighter, and a dashing aeroplane offensive preluding the battle "cleared the air" literally and metaphorically.

It was impossible for the Germans to allow the loss of this key position to their Flanders coast line to go unchallenged. But their effort to re-take Messines was a dismal failure and gave proof of a degree of demoralization that had never before been shown by the Germans in a big field of action. The counter attack was made 36 hours after our initial success. That was too late to take advantage of the confusion which must follow, in some degree, a successful advance. It was too early to permit

of a thorough preparation on the German part. Falling between the two stools of "early" and "thorough," it was a sheer waste of men and must have added greatly to losses which were already huge. The full extent of those losses will probably never be known, so many bodies and guns rest under the debris of the great mine.

With the Battle of Messines this sketch of the campaign of the British Army on the French-Belgian front can fitly close. Since June 7th the victory has been followed up and has led to several profitable gains. Its full result has not yet been reaped, nor would it be wise to speculate on the subject.

In succeeding chapters, after glancing at the war in the air, some slight account will be given of the work of the British Army in other fields.

Chapter VI.

THE WAR IN THE AIR.



HERE is on record a statement that during the course of his long and stubborn war against England there was offered to Napoleon a plan of conquering the Channel passage by the use of submarine boats: and he refused it on the ground that the sentiment of humanity would not tolerate the use of such a weapon in war. We have moved far since then, when chivalry still held the field to moderate the agonies of war. Now the German "having killed peace has killed war" by making it a matter of scientific savagery and ruthless cruelty from which civilians are not exempt. In no respect has his ruthlessness and contempt for the rights of non-combatants been more marked than in regard to the war in the air, which on his part had for its chief aim at first an eluding of the British guardian fleet so as to attack the British civil population.

The aeroplane or airship, scouting, observing,

fighting down its adversaries in the skies, is a gallant weapon of war, showing human science and human courage at its highest. The aeroplane or airship bombing fortress emplacements or troops in the field, cuts not so gallant a figure but still represents legitimate warfare. The aeroplane or airship seeking to terrorise an enemy by bombing civilian populations brings the world back to the old unrestricted savagery of war waged on a hostile country without quarter to man, woman or child: and heightens the horrors of savagery by the increased intensiveness of slaughter that science gives. Unfortunately, whilst the German air service has shown on occasions a capacity for devoted and chivalrous courage, the chief part of its record in this war will consist of a dismal tale of outrages on civilian populations.

The first air attack on a city made by the Germans was that on Antwerp, August 25th, 1914. I was in Antwerp at the time and was roused at one in the morning by the noise of the first explosion. Going out into the streets, five more explosions were heard and just a glimpse caught of a Zeppelin disappearing west of the city. The airship had drifted down the wind over the sleeping city with engines silenced and had clearly deliberately passed the forts—sited from five to ten miles away from the centre of the city—and had discharged its bombs over the residential quarters. In all six bombs were dropped, ten persons were killed and eight wounded—all

civilians. The first bomb, striking a private house near the Place de Meir, killed a pregnant woman and shockingly mutilated three seamstresses. Thus the German war from the air began.

The fury of indignation that moved the civilized world at this first Zeppelin exploit will be remembered yet. The United States press—to which one turned naturally for a judicial view of war events—was unanimous in its condemnation. The "New York Times" spoke of the attack as a "crime against humanity. . . . The persons in control of the Zeppelin showed that they were willing to take innocent lives, lives of men, women and children alike, in sheer wantonness." The "New York Sun" wrote of "this arch-deed of pitiless savagery": the "New York World" of "downright murder." The "Washington Post" wrote: "This is not war but mere ruthless butchery"; and the "Washington Times" summed it up as "barbarism in the last degree."

The British air service was at this time very slender in strength. But an effort was made to help Belgium. A squadron of British naval planes took post at Antwerp from which base it raided the German centres of Zeppelin activity. Probably the first aeroplane night flight of the war was made by two British aviators of this squadron, who took to the air on the night of September 2nd, 1914, when it was reported that a Zeppelin was approaching Antwerp.

Unmoved by the protests of neutral civilisation,

Germany set her energies to develop a Zeppelin campaign against Great Britain and France, particularly directed at London and Paris. That against Paris was soon abandoned. The circle of fortifications around the city, the fact that all the country to be traversed was provided with anti-aircraft guns, made the enterprise very dangerous, and the French Government supplied an additional reason for prudence in their announcement that full reprisals would be taken for any air-attacks on the civil population of Paris.

The Zeppelin campaign against London and Great Britain generally was, in spite of the greater distance to be traversed, a safer enterprise, and it was spurred on by an intense hatred. France had been made to feel the terrors of German warfare in many a desolated department. England as yet was untouched. The development of a sound defence against Zeppelin raids was one of the most vexatious problems that faced the British Government in 1914-1915. It was chiefly vexatious for this reason—that the temptation had to be sternly resisted of allowing a certain sectional clamour to divert the energies of our air service from the properly paramount function of giving vision to the armies at the front to the secondary task of defending non-combatants from murderous attacks. Perhaps one of the best proofs of the steady courage with which the British people have faced the trials of this war

is the fact that this temptation was so well resisted. It was a bitter thing that our towns should be bombarded and our women and children slaughtered whilst we had inadequate means of defence. But it would have been a shameful thing if in a panic of precaution we had torn out the eyes of the army in the field and set it up as the first duty of our air service to bomb German towns and to patrol our cities against raiders.

That was not done. London, with a general stoicism that was set in high relief rather than spoiled by the hysteria of a few, suffered under Zeppelin raids which the London defences at the time could not beat off. Not a gun, not a man, not a plane that was necessary to the army in the field was withdrawn. As quickly as possible new guns were cast, additional men trained, new measures devised. Very soon the German hope that the Zeppelin would terrorise the British people into a dishonourable peace was proved to be vain. To-day, according to the disappointed admissions of the German press, the Zeppelin is no longer a serious menace to the security of any British city, and the world in general has cause to be grateful that an arm of war which threatened to be destructive to the continued existence of civilised community has been countered.

Zeppelins no longer raid British towns with impunity. The process of Zeppelin raiding has been found so expensive that there are signs of its being

abandoned altogether, whilst an effort is being made to develop another method of frightfulness—the bombing of civilian populations by squadrons of aeroplanes.

The first Zeppelin attacks upon England were made without loss or apparent danger of loss, to the raiders. Following this immunity the raiders became more and more daring, venturing over the industrial Midlands as well as over the metropolitan area. In January 1916 a raid over the North-East Coast and the Midlands killed 67 and injured 117. But a Zeppelin was brought down in the North Sea by the Navy—perhaps one of the raiders. Whilst offensive-defensive measures were being perfected, the best British response at the time was by regulations in regard to lights and by stricter supervision of aliens in our midst, to increase the navigation difficulties of the enemy's airships, which, it may be hazarded, in certain cases were aided by local spies as well as by the lights of our cities and railway trains.

In March 1916 another raid, carried out during a snowstorm, killed 18 and injured 52. During the same month 43 were killed and 66 injured in another raid; an indication of what was being prepared for the Zeppelin came in this raid, when Flight Lieutenant Brandon attacked and bombed one of the Zeppelins, with what result is not certainly known. In May Zeppelin L.20 was certainly destroyed in a raid and

two more were shot down by the Navy. By the end of May 1916 Great Britain had suffered from 44 air raids the losses of 222 men, 114 women and 73 children killed, and in all 1,005 wounded. But the murderous course of the Zeppelin was now in a fair way to be checked. A series of fruitless raids suggested that the defensive measures taken were at least frightening the raiders off their targets.

At the front in July-August the British air service on the Somme had absolutely blinded the enemy by beating his aeroplanes and observation balloons out of the sky; and the German High Command apparently ordered a grand Zeppelin raid on England in the hope that it would cause the withdrawal from the Somme front of some of the British air forces. So on September 1st came the most extensive of all the airship attacks yet made. No less than 13 Zeppelins crossed the Channel to attack the Eastern Counties and London. Of these three got to London. One was attacked by Flight Lieutenant W. L. Robinson and brought down in flames at Cuffley. Its fall could be witnessed from London where seemingly the whole population had gathered on roofs, on fire-stairs, in the streets to watch the battle in the air. The roar of delight as the flaming Zeppelin came down could be heard many miles away. Such exultation over dying enemies could not have existed, could not, have been condoned, before the German gave to this war its atrocious character.

Now who can blame if pity is denied to the murderer of civilians killed in the act of murdering?

During the same month of September 1916 another fleet of 12 Zeppelins came over the East Coast, and two were destroyed—L.32 and L.33. Of the latter the crew were saved and treated as prisoners of war. In yet another raid, on October 1st, one Zeppelin was attacked by Lieutenant Tempest and brought down north of London.

From September 2nd to October 1916 four Zeppelin raiders had been destroyed. Now there was never to be an effective raid without its cost in Zeppelins. November 27th two more were brought down and for a time raiding was given up. On its resumption in March 1917 the proportion of losses suffered by the Germans to losses inflicted kept high. The March bag was one Zeppelin, May one, June two. An indication of the failure of the Zeppelin was now given by the development on the part of the Germans of raids by squadrons of aeroplanes. The first attacked Folkestone; the second London. Both inflicted serious casualties on the civil population, an especially shocking incident of the latter being the bombing of a school. The bombs killed 16 children and wounded many others. The result was a notable accession to the British war determination. The next day a father of six children who had claimed exemption from military service publicly withdrew his claim. His example was

followed and there was a noticeable "tightening up of belts" everywhere.

A strong demand was made, too, that reprisal raids should be made on German towns. It is possible that just as the Germans forced the use of poison gas on combatants, it will be found necessary, in order to stop German murders of civilians, to threaten, if not to carry out, reprisals in kind. It is only scruple that stands in the way for the British forces have won the general mastery of the air and can raid German towns as effectively as the Germans can raid British towns.

If first attention has been given in this chapter to the illegitimate use of aircraft in war it is not because that is the most important but because the Germans have made it the most notorious. War from the air on defenceless towns is a thing which will be made impossible in the future if there is any valid power within the grasp of civilised communities. War in the air (if unhappily war is to come again to afflict humanity) will develop undoubtedly even beyond the high importance it has already reached. In land warfare to-day the aeroplane has become the chief aid of the high command in obtaining intelligence of the enemy's movements. It is the sole eye of the heavy artillery and the invaluable auxiliary of the field artillery observation. It further takes up the full duties of a scout—obtaining intelligence, attacking troop trains and harassing

deployments. Every day it finds fresh uses and to an increasing extent with each unfolding of the grim history of the war a great battle is preluded by a struggle for local supremacy in the air. That supremacy won, an enemy is blinded. His artillery cannot direct their fire on targets except such as are within the always limited bounds of direct observation. He cannot discover the concealed batteries which bombard his positions with air-directed accuracy. He cannot find out what concentrations of force are being made in front of him. He cannot see what is going on "behind the hill"; and he is fighting a force which *can* see, which knows every new yard of trench he digs, every new gun position he makes, every troop train he brings up.

The tasks of the air service in a land campaign are various and are carried out by aeroplanes of different types and captive air balloons (which, anchored to a fixed base, soar up into the high air to make telescopic and photographic observations) and dirigible airships. The aeroplane has nine-tenths of the work, and for different branches of its work there are different types: battle-planes, whose chief task is to destroy and fight down the enemy machines; raiding planes which make war on the enemy's lines of communication, destroying railways, ammunition depots and barracks; photographing planes which traverse the country behind the enemy's lines, taking a photographic record which later will reveal to the

Staff the new trenches, new roads, new gun positions; direct observation planes which keep an eye on enemy movements; and artillery observation planes, which go up as auxiliaries to the batteries and guide the gunner to his exact target by recording the fall of his shells.

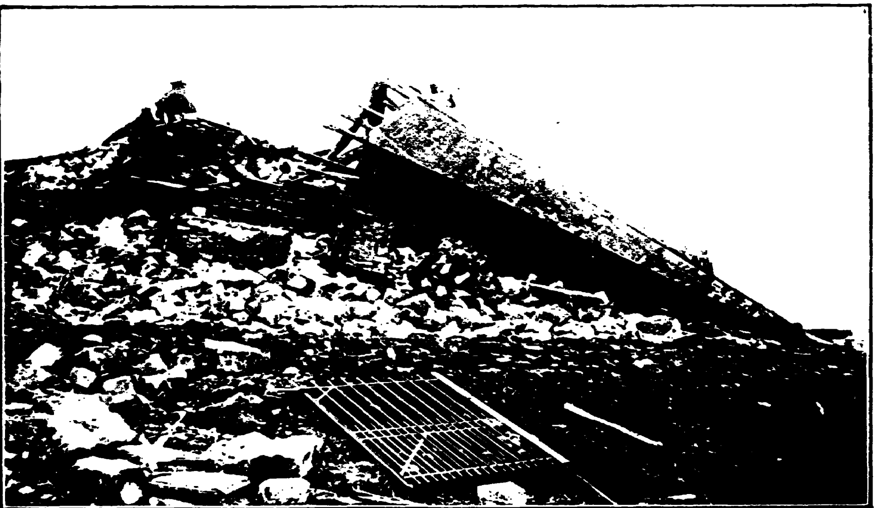
The work of these last is particularly interesting and to the uninitiated particularly mysterious. A heavy battery is given the task of destroying the railway station at X, six miles to the rear of the enemy's front lines. The battery commander works off on the map the direction and the range and prepares to open fire. An observation plane soars up and hovers over the target. It sends the signal to the battery to fire by wireless. Some seconds after the shell arrives. It is observed to fall 250 yards short and 400 yards too much to the right. An arranged map code—which cannot wisely be explained—allows this information to be sent to the wireless station. From there it is telephoned to the battery. The battery corrects. The next shell is 100 yards over and 50 yards too much to the left. That observation is signalled. After a few correcting rounds the observation plane is usually able to signal that the target has been hit.

During the early stages of the war the Germans had a great superiority in aircraft as they had in artillery and all other material. They knew that the war, *their* war, was coming, and got ready. But

German prevision did not grasp the extent to which the new arm would influence modern war. A great deal of nonsense has been written about the marvellous German foresight regarding the war. As a matter of truth, except that they knew when the war would be—and that knowledge was as much (or as little) credit to them as the knowledge of a burglar that he will break into a jeweller's shop on a certain date—the Germans showed little scientific foresight. The mobile heavy howitzer was their only big score. In regard to air war they mistakenly pinned their faith to the Zeppelin rather than to the aeroplane, imagining that a machine that seemed to be the more suitable for massacring the civilian population behind the line was the more likely to be decisive. Thus their supply of aeroplanes was not commensurate with the needs of their army: and the real use of the aeroplane they learned slowly from the foe rather than evolved for themselves.

To the present day the German air service is inferior in tactic and strategy to the French and the British air services. It is neither so good in reconnaisance nor in artillery observation nor in battle-fighting. Every new step in aeroplane use has come from us or from the French, though the Germans have at times achieved a temporary and partial success with a new machine.

Fortunate that the German had not a scientific imagination to match the callous resolution with



A CHURCH WANTONLY DESTROYED BY THE GERMANS.

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GENE PERSHING (U.S.A.) ARRIVES IN FRANCE

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which he prepared for war. If he had, the fate of Europe would have been sealed the first year of the war. As it was he had in aeroplane equipment a great material superiority but little idea of the extent to which this could be made valuable to him, and no idea at all that his aeroplane numbers, though great, were insufficient for the use of his army in the field. There is good evidence that the British and the French army commands recognised more quickly than the German the real scope of the aeroplane. But they had not sufficient aeroplanes nor of fliers to use their knowledge. A very cautious policy was needed: to "go slow" until our material was ready and not to disclose what could be done until we were ready to do it. Such air forces as we had were rather held in leash while a great force was made ready. During 1914 and 1915 the air war was a matter of skirmishing merely. Probably the German did not even know to what a pitch of skill our air artillery observation had reached for the knowledge gained of enemy positions was stored up rather than used.

The Battle of the Somme in July 1916 unmasked for the first time fully the air forces of the allies. Simultaneously there were on our side several revelations of new material and new tactics. The German observation balloon "the Sausage," as everybody knew it, had long held the sky with hardly a challenge. On our side too, there were "Sausages" but far fewer in number and, if anything, inferior in type. All at

once there sprang up on our side a host of observation balloons of a much superior type. "They hung like bunches of grapes in the sky" wrote a German General in the course of some pathetic explanations of a defeat of his army on the Somme. At the same time our aeroplanes with a new tactic and a new bomb sallied out and drove all the German "Sausages" to earth.

So much for the observation balloons. To almost as complete an extent the German aeroplanes were driven out of the air by a sudden swoop in overwhelming force. We cleared the Heavens over the German lines and held our position there. We spotted his batteries to destroy them, guarded our own batteries, plunged down on his convoys, bombed his depots and even fired into his infantry with machine guns from the air. The German army like a blinded Polyphemus raged and struggled in vain.

The Franco-British victory on the Somme has not yet been fully appreciated. It was a successful assault on a position which had been made, as it was thought, invincible. It was the taking by frontal attack of a whole chain of Port Arthurs within a time limit (and these fortresses not beleagured in any way but in full rear communication with their base of supplies). It did the impossible; and succeeded mainly because in the first instance we beat the enemy out of the air, so blinded his eyes, and passed through his lines.

The vital importance of the air war was shown to the Germans that first week in July. He was not slow to turn every energy of his highly organised nation to work to try to make good the position. As the Battle of the Somme went on day by day the German air service rallied. New observation balloons appeared. Aeroplanes were withdrawn from the task of bombing defenceless civilians and came to the battle area. Our air victory was proved to have been not final; towards the close of August the Germans had come back to the air. He had not re-established an equilibrium but he had again air fleets in being. Our batteries, our infantry found the difference and casualties behind the actual front line increased.

The appearance of a new German type of aeroplane, swifter, more agile, more deadly, actually threatened our supremacy for a time. It was necessary to counter this machine with a better one and to wait patiently, submitting to losses meanwhile, until we had a good stock of these machines, sufficient for a decisive victory. That victory was prepared for and won. A prelude to the Battle of the Ancre and the Battle of Arras was, as it had been to the Battle of the Somme, a great air victory. The matter cannot as yet be discussed freely. Discretion forbids the publication of what might give hints to the enemy. But this fact has been made patent, that in the war in the air whilst the Germans may win, and do win, temporary

advantages from time to time with the appearance on their side of a machine swifter in flight, quicker to climb, more potent in attack than any we have, we recover the advantage very quickly with a machine as good or better: and throughout the Allies have shown a consistent superiority in strategy, in tactics and in individual elan; on the machinery side many of the new air developments have come from the Germans: in all other matters of air-fighting the initiative has come always from the Allies. Now that the United States, joint parent with France of the aeroplane, has come into the war, all German hope of holding her own in the air campaign has vanished. She will be swept from the air as completely as she has been swept from the sea.

CHAPTER VII.

THE WAR ON TURKEY—EGYPT, GALLIPOLI.


HE issues of the Great War cannot be properly grasped if there is not a clear understanding of the German plan in entering upon the attack. Part of that plan, of course, was to destroy for ever the position of France as a first-class Power. It was a sore grievance to Germany that France had persisted in living after the mutilation of 1870 and had refused to fall into second rank and comport herself humbly before the All-Highest War Lord of Europe. But a more complete result than the downfall of France was aimed at—the firm foundation of a German world dominion by extending German control from the Baltic to the Aegean and by establishing a German corridor from Kiel to the Persian Gulf.

The ultimate obstacles to a German world dominion were recognised as Great Britain and the United States. What the Germans knew as the "Middle Europe" plan was designed to put the German

Empire in a safe position to remove those obstacles, singly, or together by one great effort. A series of German naval bases in the Eastern Mediterranean would destroy the British path in that sea from the Mother Country to the southern Dominions. A German-controlled Asia Minor with an outlet on the Persian Gulf would bring the German arm within striking distance of India. Strategically, a German Middle Europe would thus straddle the three continents of the Old World. Economically it would command such stocks of raw material as to make German industries independent of sea interference, commanding the wheatlands around the Black Sea, the oilfields of Roumania, Southern Russia and of the Persian Gulf; the cotton, wool, leather, minerals, of territories naturally rich but poorly developed under Turkish rule. Finally from a recruiting sergeant's point of view, "Middle Europe" with its neighbouring spheres of influence would give an inexhaustible supply of cannon fodder.

The subjugation of Serbia was a necessary part of the "Middle Europe" plan as it would drive off the path to the Aegean an obstinate little people who refused to become servile tools of Germany. Turkey, which under the rule of the Young Turks had kept the corruptions and lost the virtues of old Turkey, was bribed and bamboozled into a full participation with the German plan. Bulgaria, because Bulgaria was in no sense ruled by the Bulgarian people but

was under the complete control of its Austrian king Ferdinand, followed Turkey; and Greece's king Constantine—under the spell of the German Imperial House—gave the German plan a benevolent neutrality more benevolent than neutral.

All this made a position of extraordinary difficulty for the powers allied to defend civilization in the Great War. On the British Army fell the chief responsibility of the campaigns against Turkey, which were made necessary by the German "Middle Europe" plan.

Before dealing with the main campaigns against the Turk, some of the minor campaigns into which he forced us must have a passing reference. The war against the Senussi was one of these.

The Senussi are a sect rather than a tribe, the bond of union among them being a particular tenet of Islam. Originally they cut themselves off from the main centres of Mohammedan life in order to enjoy religious liberty. At the outbreak of the Great War they held control of the desert oases south of Tripoli and west of Egypt, and were at war in a desultory fashion with the Italians but friendly to the British Government in Egypt. In 1915 however, the Senussi succumbed to Turkish and German emissaries and forced upon us another little war. The first collision was in December 1915. In all pitched battles the Senussi were defeated but they had some minor successes in cutting off outposts. During the spring of 1916 the power of the Senussi

was broken, a picturesque incident being the release of some British prisoners in the hands of the Senussi by a daring motor car raid. Danger was thus averted from Tripoli and the French North African possessions as well as from Egypt. This was one of the many "little wars" in which we were involved with the Turks. A more important campaign was that for the defence of the Suez Canal.

Early in the war the Turks developed a threat against Egypt and the Suez Canal. The first engagement was on November 21st. Its most direct consequence was that the next month the status of Egypt as a British Protectorate was definitely recognised. Some degree of Turkish occupation of the outer marches of the Protectorate was recognised to be unavoidable at first, and British effort was concentrated on a sound defence of the Suez Canal. In January 1915 the Turks had some temporary successes, but the next month were defeated and pursued away from the Suez Canal area; but they still held the Sinai Peninsula. In March of that year another Turk attack on the Canal was defeated and thereafter the Turks had other pre-occupations, at Gallipoli as well as in Mesopotamia. But in July 1915 another attempt was made on the Suez Canal, and met with another defeat. Not to recount all the incidents of attack and defence, in 1917 the British forces in Egypt definitely took the offensive. The Turks were chased out of the Sinai Peninsula, and at the time of writing

(July 1917) the Turk is holding a defensive position on the southern borders of Palestine.

The main campaigns against the Turks, were at the Dardanelles and in Mesopotamia. The Balkan campaign, too, can best come under the heading of the war against Turkey.

The land attack on Turkey at the Gallipoli Peninsula began on April 25th, 1915, after the failure of an Anglo-French fleet to force the Dardanelles. The naval attack had begun in a tentative fashion in November 1914, and was developed seriously in February 1915. Thus the Turks had ample notice of an intention to attack the Dardanelles, and when our land attack began it was faced by a prepared resistance which should have made the task impossible. On five shallow beaches fringing a precipitous coast, every point of which was strongly held by a powerfully entrenched enemy, our troops—British Regulars, "Anzacs,"* Indians and French—were flung from the transports. The losses were cruel before land was touched. The beaches when reached were mere strips of shingle, enfiladed by artillery and rifle fire. Above were almost inaccessible cliffs, bristling with Turks. But in that spirit of supreme heroism which comes now and again in the world's history to lift our thoughts to the stars, the attacking troops won through from the sea to the beach, from the beach to the cliff; and after fierce fighting for two days

* The Australian and New Zealand Army Corps

and two nights found themselves in possession of a tiny patch of the Gallipoli Peninsula. But not a yard of the area they held was not under the enemy fire, and the force depended for all supplies, including water, on what could be brought to the beaches under fire. By an impossible effort they had won an impossible position: and they held it.

The pressing task of the Allied Command was now to seek to extend our hold on the peninsula so as to secure some ground free from enemy fire. The repeated assaults on the Turkish line at Krithia had this purpose. Yard by yard of Turkish ground was won—600 yards after three days' fierce fighting by three British and two French Divisions.

So through April, May, June, July, the struggle went on without any great change. Thirst and hunger were added to the trial of the troops, for in some weather communication was absolutely impossible because of the surf on the open beaches, and always it was difficult and dangerous, for we still did not hold any ground nor any landing place safe from shell fire. The Germans came to the aid of the Turks with leaders and with guns, eager to drive into the sea these mad adventurers whom the German god seemed to have delivered into their hands. On our side it was recognised by many that to advance was impossible, but the determination was unflinching to hold on until additional forces should come to enable another attack to be made.

In August 1915 reinforcements arrived and a general attack was attempted, of which a feature was a fresh landing at Suvla Bay, on the west coast of the Gallipoli Peninsula, to turn the Turkish right. On August 6th the decisive Battle of Gallipoli was begun. It came very near to success. The tradition of heroism which the first landing had established was upheld by most of the troops. But after three days' fighting it was plain that only a miracle could bring victory. Yet another effort was made, and then on August 10th the battle was broken off.

After that the Gallipoli troops stood on the defensive, cruelly attacked by sickness as well as by the enemy, until December 1916 and January 1917, when—Fortune at last making a grudged concession to their heroism—they were able to retire from the Peninsula with practically all their guns and equipment and with just a single casualty. The Turks refrained from attacking whilst they embarked; perhaps they were hoodwinked, perhaps overawed by the fantastic courage of these men. It was a sombre chapter of the Great War, relieved by the flashing glories of the heroic troops.

The Mesopotamian campaign had meanwhile passed through alternations of fortune until with the fall of Kut-el-Amara our campaign against the Turks reached its nadir.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE WAR ON TURKEY—MESOPOTAMIA AND THE BALKANS.



HE first Mesopotamian campaign opened on November 22nd, 1914, when a Division of British and Indian troops seized Basra and Abadan Island (the headquarters of the Persian Gulf oil fields). This was effected with little loss, the Turks being taken by surprise. To hold Basra it was thought necessary to occupy Kurna, 50 miles up the river at the junction of the Euphrates (Old Channel) with the Tigris. This also was done with little loss and during the winter of 1914-15 the British Army held the sea outlet of the Mesopotamian province.

In the Spring of 1915 the Turks attempted to retrieve their loss, attacking not only Basra but the oil pipe line along the River Karun (to the East and in Persian territory). The British defending force (which had been doubled and now equalled two Divisions, all under command of General Sir John

Nixon) broke up the Turkish attack by a fruitful victory in the neighbourhood of Basra. The occupation of the whole of the vilayet (administrative district) of Basra was now decided upon and by the end of September, 1915, the British forces had occupied the Tigris Valley up to Kut-el-Amara.

So far all had gone well. But it had not been easy campaigning. Whatever Mesopotamia was in the remote past, to-day it is practically all desert with just a fringe of cultivated country near the rivers. A military advance must stick to the rivers. But the country through which the Euphrates and Tigris run is below the flood-level of the rivers, and to prevent inundation the Arabs have raised dams along the river from the headwaters to the sea. These dams are composed of loose earth and are very frail. Yet a broken dam, probably not noticed until the river has already pierced it, must be repaired at once if miles of land are not to be put under water. For two months the water in the rivers is above the surrounding ground on which the military must move and entrench. An obvious military tactic is thus to breach the dams and flood trenches and roads. Usually there are under natural conditions tracts of marsh and shallow lake one or two miles away from the rivers, the land in between being dry, or only marshy during prolonged bad weather. It is on this narrow strip of land between the river and the marsh that military operations must take place.

The extent of the lakes and marshes varies considerably from time to time and land which is passable one month is quite impassable the next, without any very apparent cause. Also the conditions at any season are different from year to year, so that it is quite impossible to be certain that a road which was suitable for traffic one year will be available next. There is yet a further source of danger. The lakes are greatly affected by the direction and force of the wind. Some of them have been observed to extend on one side and contract on the other for as much as one or two miles when a strong northerly wind has succeeded a strong southerly wind. And this very quickly.

All these difficulties are at their worst during the period of high flood, i.e., during March, April and May. During those months the movement of troops along the rivers is fraught with great danger. Troops may encamp one night on good dry ground with little or no water in sight and find the next morning that a broken dam, a shifting lake, or water which has appeared without any obvious cause has made it impossible to stir from a camp which itself may then be under water. Yet the weather is then better than at any other time during the year, with little rain and a moderate temperature. These favourable climatic conditions are entirely nullified by the dangers due to the high river.

In short, far away from the rivers want of water

makes operations impossible, near to them the excess of water is a great difficulty.

Altogether Mesopotamia is "not gay" as the French would say, from a campaigning point of view. Yet the operations of the British Army up to this point (Sept. 1915) had prospered so well, and the general situation of the world war (i.e., the political situation as well as the military situation) made a dramatic success so valuable, that we were lured to go on from Kut towards Bagdad, a premature advance, undertaken without proper transport facilities, adequate supplies or adequate forces.

On Nov. 15th, 1915, General Townshend moved forward from Kut with about 15,000 men, his force much enfeebled by its past continuous fighting, his transport problems much increased by the necessary hordes of camp followers. The nearest good supply base was Basra, 290 river miles back from Kut and his objective, Bagdad, was 500 river miles from Basra. He was not confident that the force he had was sufficient for his task but went forward in obedience to orders.

General Townshend's army pushed on bravely, fighting the enemy down as they advanced and by Nov. 22nd had come upon a reinforced Turkish Army entrenched at Ctesiphon. An attack succeeded in its first phase but could not then be carried on to a final victory. It was necessary to fall back on Kut. Rearguard actions and the attack at Ctesiphon had

cost General Townshend 30 per cent. of casualties when he reached Kut on Dec. 3rd. Then it was decided to make a stand whilst reinforcements were brought up to enable the advance to be resumed.

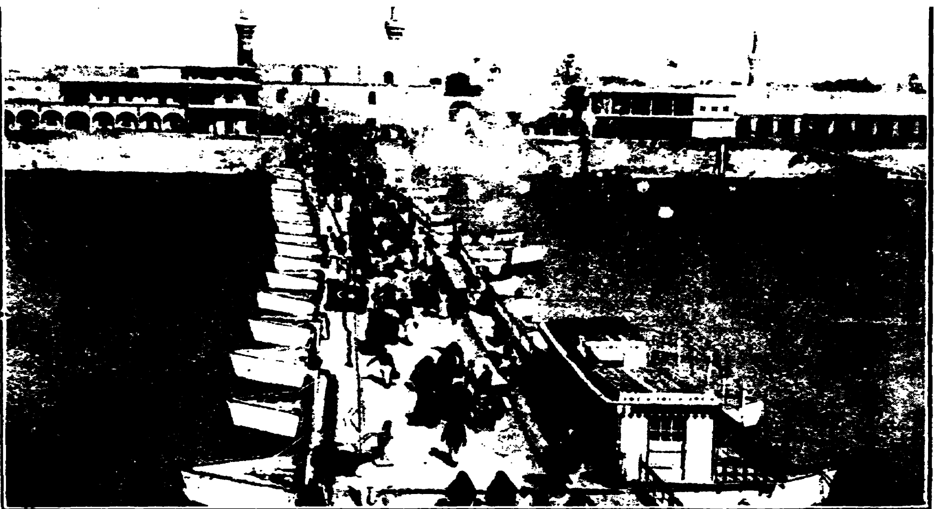
It was not possible to prevent the enemy investing Kut and soon General Townshend's force was beleagured and cut off from all supplies. A gallant stand, in which the ordinary horrors of war were aggravated by famine and disease, ended on April 29th, 1916, with the surrender of the Kut force. Meanwhile desperate efforts at relief were made. But transport facilities were poor and the very anxiety to give relief made success impossible by leading to an impatient and piece-meal use of forces as they became available. The Turks had constructed a series of entrenched positions astride the Tigris below Kut. Against these the relief army beat itself in vain. A first effort in January failed after some preliminary successes because it had not the force to push these home. Atrocious weather helped it to failure. A second effort in March-April failed chiefly because of the flooded condition of the country. Efforts were then made to provision Kut by the use of aeroplanes and by an armoured river boat, in vain.

The relief forces after the fall of Kut fell back and prepared for the final successful advance on Bagdad. But May, 1916, was a month of jubilation for the Turks.

It was not until the close of the year 1916 that



An A.M.C. Station.



BAGD. TH OLD AR. N C

p. 9

General Maude, who had taken over the command in Mesopotamia, considered his army strong enough to move forward. Transport had been thoroughly re-organised and the medical service brought up to the standard of the British army elsewhere. January, 1917, was a month of excellent progress and brought the British Army to the threshold of Kut. The Turks fought well. Flushed with past successes and aided by the natural defensive strength of the country they never yielded an easy victory and often our advance had to fall back a little before a counter-attack. But relentlessly it was pushed on and, Feb. 26th, after a score of severe battles Kut fell again into our hands and the Turks were in full retreat up the Tigris.

At Kut there were recovered some of the guns which had been lost when the British garrison surrendered, and the *Firefly*, which had probably the unique record of being the only British fighting ship to fall into the hands of an enemy during this war, was also recaptured and joined in the next advance. For a further advance was decided upon. With Kut again in our hands the Mesopotamian position had been restored and our prestige vindicated. But now, all over the far-flung British battle line, our predominance was slowly asserting itself and it was felt that the moment was really favourable for a dramatic stroke against Turkey.

Since the beginning of the operations up to the

end of February, 1917, the British Army in Mesopotamia had captured 7,000 prisoners and 28 guns. Every day now was to bring additions to these. In the early days of March Ctesiphon, which had been the extreme point of General Townshend's advance, was passed. On March 9, General Maude's victorious troops forced the passage of the Diala. On March 11th the British Army entered Bagdad. Within 15 days an advance of 110 miles had been accomplished in the face of the Turkish troops, and during the advance the River Tigris had had to be crossed three times. This victorious advance was one of the great operations of the war.

The position of the Turk was now unhappy enough. We had driven him away from Egypt, had invaded Syria, had pushed him out of Southern Arabia, and were now in possession of his Eastern capital, whilst the Russians were punishing him heavily in Persia and in Asia Minor. But, unfortunate from a military point of view as was the plight which Turkey had now reached, it was still more unhappy from a political point of view. The Turk holds not only his European but also most of his Asian territories by right of conquest, a conquest achieved chiefly at the expense of an intellectually superior race, the Arabian. For many years before the Great War, the fixed purpose of the ruling power in Turkey was to break and crush the Arab nation in every part of his empire. The persecution of the leading Arab families in Meso-

potamia and in Syria, the dismissal of Arab officials, the declared intention to put an end to the official use of the Arab language, all these were indications of a policy which meant death to every Arabian aspiration. Now the military power of the Allies, forced to war by Turkey's union with Germany, had come as the liberators of the oppressed Arabs and had made it almost certain that the Turkish Empire in Asia would share the fate of the Turkish Empire in Europe.

The fall of Bagdad was not to mark the end of Turkey's troubles in Mesopotamia. General Maude made it his next objective to push along the railway which, starting from Bagdad, was once designed to have its terminus at Berlin. He planned an attack which was to seize Samarra, the present terminus of the line, and to push the defeated Turkish Army off its lines of communication with Turkey. Incidentally the British Army was to act as a nether millstone to the Russian Army, which was coming down upon the Turks from the North. Advancing in three columns, one along the Tigris, one along the Euphrates, the other going N.E. towards the Russian Army in Persia, the British forces carried out with complete success the work allotted to them. The beaten Turkish Army made a desperate stand now and again but it was clearly broken and hopeless and would have been destroyed utterly in all probability had not political events in

Russia relieved for a time the pressure from the north.

By the beginning of April the British Army was 60 miles N.E. of Bagdad and the danger was over of a Turk effort to flood the country around the city by manipulating the dams on the upper river. April 10th the Turks were lured by the false hope of a British retreat into advancing a little towards Bagdad. The British retirement proved to be a trap and the Turks were very heavily punished. By the end of April Samarra station was occupied and the Turkish power in Mesopotamia broken.

The participation of the British Army in the campaign in the Balkans can most conveniently be grouped with the operations against Turkey for it was part of the plan to checkmate Germany's "Middle Europe" scheme. Almost from the beginning of the war British land and naval forces had been giving some little help to the Serbians, help which was sternly limited in amount not by our grudging but by the transport difficulties allied to the pressing demands from other fronts. The help of the naval gunners was of value in allowing Serbia to hold her own on the Danube.

In the Autumn of 1915 it was clear that the Germans had resolved on a decisive effort against Serbia, with entry upon the Aegean by Salonika as the final objective and the clearing of the railway from Berlin to Constantinople as the immediate objective. Bul-

garia had been secured as an ally: and the Greek King could be relied upon to help in so far as he dared. The Allied effort in reply was to land an army at Salonika, Oct. 5, 1915, which was intended to march up the valley of the Vardar. The British and the French supplied this army jointly. Its intervention was successful in defeating the final objective of the German plan, the reaching of Salonika, but unfortunately it could not prevent the over-running of Serbia though it was able in a measure to help the retreat of the Serbian Army into Albania.

The Allied Army as soon as it had landed at Salonika was confronted with veiled hostility from the Greek King, who had resolved to betray his ally, Serbia, and whose attitude to our forces was practically that of armed neutrality. The timid treachery of the Greek King combined with the bold treachery of the Bulgarian King, who carried on his protestations of friendship with the Allies up to the very eve of a cowardly blow in the back against the Serbians, were two factors in depriving the Salonika expedition of its full effectiveness. There were other factors more within our control. But a frank discussion of the subject, with the campaign still proceeding, is not possible.

On Oct. 16th the British-French forces advanced from Salonika and pushed up the Valley of the Vardar. The Greek King reluctantly conceded Salonika as a base, and at the same time passed into the hands

of the Bulgars the fortress keys of his frontier. In spite of what effort we could make Serbia was conquered, but a great part of her army escaped and was reformed under our protection at Corfu. On Dec. 13th, 1915, the Balkan Force, with no hope of effecting anything by an advance, fell back on its fortified base at Salonika. It was doomed to a long wait then until the following summer, when an advance was made which with the help of the re-constituted Serbian Army, recovered Monastir and began the restoration of Serbia. But to this day the position of the British-French-Serbian-Italian-Russian Army in the Balkans is a "holding one" in the main. At last, however, the position in Greece has been clarified with the abdication of the King and her attitude is no longer one of armed neutrality. There is good hope that the long patient waiting at Salonika will soon be rewarded with the chance of an effective blow against Turkey and Germany.

CHAPTER IX.

CAMPAIGNS IN AFRICA AND AUSTRALASIA.



HE pace at which the Overseas German Empire passed from the rule of Germany into the custody of the Allies has been one of the dramatic features of the Great War. Naturally the greater share of the many Colonial campaigns fell to the British Army.

Before the war was a month old (August 27th) Togoland was conquered with its great wireless station, so powerful as to connect with Germany, with all the German Colonies in Africa and with Pernambuco in South America. The loss of this wireless station was serious from a strategic point of view to the German Powers.

German South-West Africa was the next African Colony to be conquered. General Botha, Prime Minister of the South African Union opened the campaign in 1915, and by July 9th of the same year the German Governor Seitz bowed to the inevitable and surrendered to the British forces. The campaign

had involved difficult questions of transport. It had been begun with the construction of a new harbour and railway along the Coast. General Botha, his preparations completed, swept the enemy forward with boldness and energy. The Germans fought bitterly: they even poisoned the wells as they retreated, and indications were many that in the first stage they reckoned on a quick retrieval of their early defeats. But after four months their fate was unconditional surrender.

Immediately to the southward of Nigeria, its seaboard beginning just below Calabar and the mouth of the Cross River, and continuing southward to Spanish territory, is the Protectorate known as the Cameroons. Its central depth, north and south, extends all the way from Lake Chad to the Belgian Congo. East and west it extends from the Atlantic, above the Isle of Fernando Po, to the Congo at Singa below Bangui. The Cameroons passed into Germany's hands in 1884. At the outbreak of the Great War joint operations for the capture of the Protectorate were begun by the British and the French, Major-General Sir Charles Dobell in command.

An important early success was the capture of the Port of Duala, which gave command of the North and Midland Railways. In regard to this, an incident showing German ideas of rule in Africa was the capture of a letter written by Lieutenant Von Engelbrechten, formerly Private Secretary to the Governor

of the Cameroons, to Hauptman Gaisser commanding the troops at Buea and Victoria. It declared, *inter alia :* " All Dualas met on the roads carrying weapons (Matchets, bows, arrows, spears or rifles) are to be shot. Prisoners will only be made when they can be formally tried and condemned to death. All Dualas still in the employment of the Government in the Northern Railway part of the Duala District will be arrested and sent under escort to Bschang. Bare district will do the same. I have ordered the destruction of all Duala villages." This punishment was to be inflicted on the Dualas because the Lieut. alleged that they had furnished guides and performed other services for the allies.

With the fall of Duala the Cameroons were attacked systematically from the coast, from Nigeria and from Sierra Leone. The tropical jungle country of the coast made campaigning very difficult, and the native troops of the Germans fought well. The Germans, on the defensive, and with their bases in the healthy high grounds, had all the advantages of position. The task of subduing 300,000 square miles was therefore not a simple one. Nevertheless the work went on without serious check until February, 1915, when a German rally, and the rigours of the climate gave pause to the operations against Jaunde, the new German capital. After a short rest for re-organisation the advance was resumed and on January 1, 1916, the Allies reached Jaunde. They had not the satis-

faction of capturing the German force which fled into Spanish Guinea and was there interned. The same month Mora near Lake Tchad surrendered. In March, 1916, the conquest of the Cameroons was complete.

The campaign in German East Africa was the most strenuous of all. At the outbreak of the war von Lettow-Vorbeck, the German Commander in East Africa, took the aggressive against British East Africa. The forces on either side were composed of native troops led by trained white officers and non-commissioned officers, augmented by volunteers from the white settlers and traders in the various provinces. On each of the frontiers there were bitter contests between the enemy and little Belgian and British detachments, working alone, far away from their bases, having no reinforcements and, in many cases, but a small supply of ammunition. We were successful at the outset in containing the German troops within their own borders. Except on a small tract of land near Taveta, the Germans gained no footing on British territory.

With the arrival of troops from India, the Germans were (October, 1914) forced to take the defensive. A force of European volunteers and Indian troops then advanced towards Kilimanjaro and defeated the Germans near Longido, which, on evacuation by the Germans, was occupied but afterwards abandoned.

A period of stalemate followed, with systematic military preparation on both sides, the Germans raising and training large numbers of native recruits. What fighting there was during this period was inconclusive, but on all the frontiers the Germans were held to their own territory, and with the destruction of the cruiser "Konigsberg," trapped in the Rufiji delta, a blockade of the coast was established by a British Naval squadron. Lakes Victoria and Nyasa too were in the power of the British, and on Lake Tanganyika a little flotilla of armed motor-boats, laboriously transported overland, had cleared the lake by Christmas, 1915, of German vessels.

With the adhesion of Portugal to the Allied cause, the Mozambique frontier was closed to the Germans and their territory was encircled. The time had then come for a big forward move. In January, 1916, forces from South Africa released by the success of operations elsewhere against the Germans began to arrive. General Sir Horace Smith Dorrien took the command but owing to illness resigned and General Smuts who had been the able lieutenant of General Botha in the conquest of S.W. Africa succeeded. With a really well-equipped and adequate force he began a campaign which was carried through almost without a check to a successful conclusion.

The terrain was very difficult owing to the thick bush, the broken country in the foothills of the great Kilimanjaro mountains, the hill water courses

which become in rain unfordable torrents, the great rivers necessitating many bridges, and, worst of all, the unwholesome disease-infested marshes and the black cotton soil, which, bad even in the dry seasons, becomes a hopeless quagmire after rains. It was a campaign for transport and engineers, as much as for soldiers, but big risks were taken, great hardships cheerfully incurred and endured; and the advance went forward with an inexorable and accurate progress.

The first objective was the Kilimanjaro district, and the second the Tanga-Usambara-Aruscha railway. The possession of these would give access to the interior of the country and eventually to the Central Railway from Dar-es-Salam to Lake Tanganyika. By the end of January, Longido, North West of Kilimanjaro, and Serengeti to the East, had been occupied, and the enemy had retired from Kasigau and Mbuyuni, whence he had so long harried our railway. It was desired to complete the occupation of the Kilimanjaro district before the break of the rainy season. By March 13 Moshi, the German H. Q. in the Kilimanjaro district was occupied and by the end of the month the whole of this healthy mountain district was clear.

After conquering Kilimanjaro General Smuts reorganised his force into three Divisions and planned to move on the interior towards the Central Railway, thus throwing the German force coastwards on to

the unhealthy marsh country. General Van Deventer with the 2nd Division moved rapidly south and seized a plateau dominating the Central Railway. The enemy at this point saw the mistake which he had made and tried desperately to push Van Deventer aside. The effort was in vain and by May General Smuts had got his great "beat" in full swing with a Belgian force thrusting from Belgian Congo and British forces from Rhodesia and Nyasaland co-operating. The enemy under irresistible pressure broke into two, the main body heading to such refuge as was offered by the marshy Rufiji Valley (which General Smuts had designed for their reception) and a smaller body getting to the Mgeta Valley, a somewhat more wholesome quarter.

By the end of October, all the railways were in the hands of the British, none of the old seats of Government remained to the Germans and their forces were in refuge in two quarters, the smaller body on the Mahenge Plateau, which was fairly healthy, the larger body entangled among the coast marshes. The rainy season then put a stop to operations. The "beat" was resumed in January 1917, when we took the offensive again in the Mgeta valley and on the Rufiji River, driving the Germans in the latter district into an unwholesome delta 90 miles by 30 miles between Dar-es-Salam and Kalwa. General Smuts was now able to give up the command to take up more important Imperial work in London.

At the time of writing, though remnants of Germans still hold out in E. Africa (the Mgeta valley force, at latest, had dispersed and parts of it had broken into Portuguese Africa), the conquest of this German colony was well advanced and an area as great as two Germany's had passed in the main from under German rule.

We have now seen the British Army at work in the main field of operations against the German Army; in a series of campaigns against Turkey; and in another series of wars designed to free the African races from German cruelty and tyranny. But yet the record of the British Army's activities is not complete.

It is part of the German policy of warfare to promote seditious trouble within the frontiers of her enemies. On the outbreak of the Great War, in all parts of the British Empire where there was the slightest hope of success, German colonists, abusing the hospitality they had received to act as spies, and special agents of the German government, sought to upset civil order as a means of embarrassing the British army. Nowhere did these attempts to promote sedition win any measure of popular approval but in some quarters they were successful in withdrawing the attention of large forces from the task of beating the enemy. Perhaps on the whole the testimony that their universal failure provided to the success of the British system of government outweighed

any evil they were able to effect. But to give full credit to the British military effort since 1914 allowance must be made for the hampering influence of such troubles as the seditious risings promoted by the Germans in India and elsewhere.

And yet there is another field of operations to be noticed, the territories bordering on the Pacific. A British force co-operated with the Japanese Navy and Army in wresting Kiao-Chau from the Germans and ending a German colony in China, the origin of which had been shabby enough but the loss of which seemed to be taken much to heart in Prussia. The Australian and New Zealand forces were quick to move off in the South Pacific against the German Colonies there. Before the war was a month old the New Zealanders had seized Samoa. The Australians quickly followed with the invasion of German New Guinea, the Bismarck Archipelago and other German settlements which were won with some slight loss in bush fighting. On September 24th, 1914, the German flag was hauled down in the South Pacific and the Australasian troops were making ready to come into action on the European and African fronts.

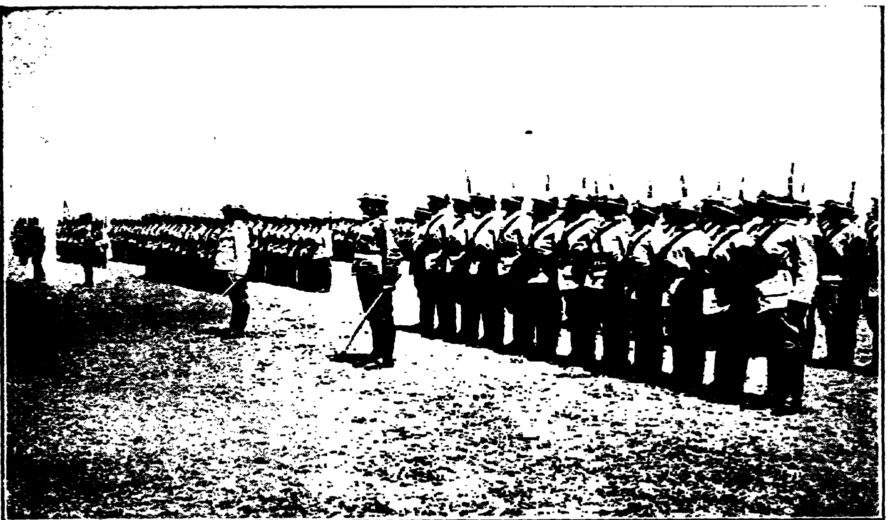
In a Diary of Events which concludes this book an attempt has been made to chronicle step by step the various achievements on all continents of the British Army. It will be seen from the Diary that on some days the Army was fighting two battles of the first magnitude in different quarters of the globe ;

that on other days there were events of importance in which it was engaged in three continents. Not even in the greatest of the wars of the Roman Empire had a single nation ever held so wide a battle-front, engaged so many enemies, changed so greatly hostile frontiers. Forced into war, reluctantly entering this vast tragedy of slaughter, the British Army—who can deny?—has acquitted itself well.



THE GIRLS OF ENGLAND AT WORK IN AN AEROPLANE FACTORY.

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Serbian Infantry To-day.

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CHAPTER X.

BEHIND THE LINE.



HIS sketch of the work of the British Army in its various campaigns of the Great War would not give a just impression of the giant effort made without some references to the services ancillary to the fighting force. It will not be possible to give space to a description, however slight, of all of them. Transport alone would call for a great volume; to tell of the making and repairing of roads, the laying out of tram lines and the duplication of railways, the picturesque patriotism which tore up railway lines in India, Australia and Canada to meet the exorbitant demands of the Army on the French front, the immense mobilisation of motor transports and steam tractors. When in a battle on a front of ten miles half a million or so of men are fighting fiercely and passing constantly to and fro and along the front, the problems of Transport are hardly within the grasp of the human mind. Nor shall I attempt to describe

the Engineering Service, in some aspects closely allied to the Transport but having also its own special work in the fighting line: work of miners, of entrenchers, of signallers. The Medical Service will be taken as an example of the ancillary services of the British Army, partly because its work has been conspicuously devoted and successful, partly because it will be a relief to turn for a moment from the contemplation of destruction to that of saving and healing.

There was in the Mesopotamian theatre of the war one early grave instance of British neglect of the medical service. The fury of indignation that it created was perhaps one of the best compliments that could be paid to the general efficiency of a service from which the families of the soldiers had been taught to expect perfection. To-day that expectation is met everywhere. On the French-Belgian front it has been met almost from the first.

There is a tale of the Old Man of the Mountain—one of those earnest and thorough fighting leaders of the early days of Mohammedanism—that he followed this plan of recruiting for his army: Healthy and active young men were raided from the villages, drugged, and then taken to a valley. There all the enchantments of life awaited them. They were gorged with the pleasures of the senses, and told that this was paradise, and the way to come back for ever was to die fighting for their Chief. This

lesson sufficiently learned, the recruits were again drugged, and returned to their villages. No compulsion was then needed to get them into the fighting ranks.

Whether or not the story is authentic, it often came into my mind on seeing the hospital services at the Front. "Going sick" was the open sesame to a spell of life as care-free, as luxurious, as pleasure-packed as any Sybarite could desire. It gave an earthly paradise, provided not as a bait but as a consolation for those who fell by the roadside in "doing their bit" at the front.

A German officer-prisoner—he had come from the province of Schleswig-Holstein and was no Hun—talking to me on the Somme of the British Army put our R.A.M.C. Service and Air Service first for efficiency. He classed them far higher than the corresponding Prussian services. In the fighting line and as a wounded prisoner he had seen a great deal of our Army, was inclined to be a fair critic, and had some knowledge to make his opinion worth attention. French officers, speaking of our Medical Service, have more than once praised it as the finest in this war and as "absolutely perfect."

Such flattering outside opinions reinforce the conclusion which the record of work of the R.A.M.C. prompts; that our Army Medical Corps has solved very successfully the vast problems which the Great War has presented. The Somme advance put the

Corps to a test the severity of which it is very difficult to appreciate. The greatest armies known to history grappled in a continuous and furious struggle, not for a day or a night or week, but for months. The wounds caused by hand grenades and high-explosive shells were often of terrible extent. The battle-field to a depth of five miles was under constant shell fire, and transport of the wounded for that distance was therefore always under fire, and roads were torn up almost as soon as made. Conditions of infection were extraordinarily unfavourable. Traffic regulation had to overcome the most serious obstacles, since railways, roads, and tracks had to provide for the constant reinforcements; for the frequent passage to and fro of relieving Divisions; for food and water for men and horses, and also for ammunition unprecedented in quantity.

The first thing to be noted in the R.A.M.C. organisation is the close and sympathetic liaison between the R.A.M.C. staff and the strategic and tactical staff. A division is going into action, taking over area Q and designing to advance and take the village of ——— from the enemy. The Colonel R.A.M.C. on the Divisional Staff is at once in close consultation with the chief staff officer of the division and with the engineer staff officer. It has to be decided what casualties may be expected; what of the existing roads and tracks can be given to the R.A.M.C. and for what hours; what new roads and tracks

can be developed for them; what are the most sheltered tracks by which wounded may be brought in from a position when it has been won. The R.A.M.C. Staff has to be as careful in its study of the map of the country—revised from day to day after reports from the Flying Corps—as the Infantry or the Engineers. On the soundness of this preliminary work and the promptness of the modification of a sound scheme in response to the changing conditions of the action as it proceeds will depend to a great extent the fate of the wounded. It is because of the closeness of the co-operation between the General Staff and the Medical Staff that such good results are obtained.

This personal narrative of a "casualty" will illustrate the system in working:—

"It was on the day we took the trenches in front of Le Sars. At dawn I had taken post at a point in the first-line trench which gave a good view of the area under attack. Some little time after noon, not long before the time appointed for our infantry to go over, a salvo of H.E. from a German field battery arrived over the post, fast travelling and giving no chance to dodge. I got it hard in one arm and one foot (bones broken, main arteries severed). The "moral effect" of the R.A.M.C. organization told at once. A feeling of absolute confidence in the gallantry and efficiency of the R.A.M.C., from stretcher-bearers to surgeons, fills a ranks; and I was buoyed up by that confidence so as not to be in the least dismayed by this bad smash in the front line, with several miles of shell-swept country intervening before a road fit for a motor ambulance could be reached. A brother officer and a telephonist helped to put on a tourniquet (of telephone wire) a rough splint, and "shell dressings,'

which all ranks carry into action. These shell dressings are an improvement on the old field dressing, but are on the same principle—an ampule of iodine extract, a pad, and a large lint bandage enclosed in waterproof cloth. Within twenty minutes a stretcher with bearers had arrived from the nearest R.A.M.C. aid post.

"To carry me back through the maze of trenches would have been a day's work; so the bearers went "over the top." Shell fire was heavy, rifle fire and machine-gun fire not wanting, but the men marched through it over the torn and corpse-strewn ground. Their own lives were cheerfully, and as a matter of course, risked to give the best chance to the wounded man. The first dressing station was distant about a mile and a half from the front-line trench. Here a doctor and his staff worked under almost constant shell fire. When the fire was very severe work was done in a dug-out taken over from the Germans, and reached by a steep flight of 37 steps. But to carry severely wounded cases down there was practically impossible; they had to be dressed above ground. Dangerous for the doctor, of course, but necessary to risk life in order to save lives. (There have been 964 casualties among doctors in the British Service since the war began). Here wounds were dressed, tea enjoyed, and also a cigarette. It is the stock sedative for the soldier when he is wounded, efficacious in almost every case except decapitation. Now, there was a further stretch of about three miles of shell-churned, shell-swept country without roads, and new stretcher-bearers took up the task of carrying.

"Near to Contalmaison the road system was met, and motor transport relieved the stretcher-bearers and carried me to an underground shell-proof hospital, where dressings were examined, anti-tetanus serum administered, and again tea. Here in desperate cases—or, indeed, at the Field Dressing Station further back, operations might be performed, but never were except in case of dire necessity. Within a very few minutes I moved on again to a hospital in Becourt Wood, designed to sift and class cases. From there most were sent on to the Clearing Hospital at Railhead, but the

dangerously wounded might be kept or sent to near-by special hospitals, such as that for abdominal wounds. There were thus three stages and three examinations between the First Aid post in the trenches to the Railhead Hospital. They did only what was essential at those stages, the purpose of which is to guard against a patient succumbing to exhaustion or a sudden hæmorrhage, and to stop those wounded whose condition forbids transport.

"The Clearing Hospital at Railhead was reached about seven o'clock, 5½ hours since the wounds were received. During that time I had been carried about five miles by stretcher-bearers about ten miles by car and had had one dressing and two precautionary examinations. By eight o'clock I was on the operating table and in all human probability out of actual danger either of losing life or limb. The rest was a matter of treatment and nursing."

The development of surgical treatment with this war has been as wonderful in its way as the development of artillery tactics. Our surgery now is as conservative as the best school of American dentistry. Amputations have decreased very greatly and wounds which once would cause death with certainty are successfully treated. The system of this new surgery may be epitomised:

(1). Prompt precaution against first infection. Almost every wound received is foully infected from soil or air. Literally millions of men and animals are quartered on a narrow area, the greater part of which was highly septic in the first instance through intense cultivation. It is no exaggeration to say that much of the fighting is carried on upon land which approximates very closely to the conditions of a sewage farm. This infectiveness is met by training every

soldier in the use of the iodine dressing for instant application to a wound and providing him with its materials; by pushing the doctors' posts up so close to the firing line as to ensure a more scientific and thorough disinfection as soon afterwards as possible; by establishing anti-tetanus inoculation posts in the fighting line (usually they are about on the same line as the Field batteries).

(2). Early clearing of wounds of bone fragments, &c.; thorough sifting of cases, with prompt despatch to the coast of all men who can travel after preliminary surgical treatment. This involves keeping large staffs of operating surgeons at railheads and within the actual area of warfare. It saves thousands of amputations in cases of limbs smashed by shell fragments.

(3). Patient reliance on Nature to repair tissue if thoroughly aseptic conditions are ensured. Hospital treatment may consist for many weeks of simple cleansing and dressing with salt water.

(4). Bold surgery to replace losses of tissue by grafting from other bodies, or by the use of suitable artificial material. This comes only after Nature has been allowed and encouraged (by aseptic dressings, massage, &c.) to do her utmost in the work of restoration.

With this system cures are affected so marvellous as almost to rival those advertised by vendors of patent pills. From stretcher-bearers in the front-

line trench to the nurses in the convalescent homes, where the invalid gets the final polish put on his restored fitness, the system is thoroughly efficient, and at the same time generous with time and devotion. It is building up one of the proud monuments of the British Army in this war, a monument not of dead brass or stone, but of young lives snatched from the hands of death.

Mainly I have dealt with the treatment of the wounded, and those who fall sick in the line. But this is only half of the R.A.M.C. work. The other half comes within the region of preventive medicine. It has a multitude of activities; practical sanitary engineering to keep trenches and encampments as far as possible free from dangerous pollution; water testing and purification; vaccination and inoculation against typhoid and para-typhoid; precautions against vermin and against that new horror of winter war "trench-feet"; constant inspection as a precaution against skin diseases; sympathetic and intelligent safeguarding against sex diseases.

The net result is that in a war which is waged under the most unhealthy conditions ever known to mankind, the losses from disease have shown a lower percentage than in any previous war, so much a lower percentage as to show an improvement bordering on the miraculous. Typhoid (to take one example), which was once the great scourge of armies, causing far more casualties than all the shot and shell of the enemy,

has been almost entirely banished from the British Army. The typhoid record of that Army in the field is better than that of the civil population of the average well-managed town.

Finally, to comprehend better the work of organization which the British military effort has involved, let the reader glance for a few moments, farther back from the fighting line than the hospital bases, at the munition shops which keep the armies supplied. Here, too, happily, there can be gleaned a message of hope and comfort for a future time of peace, for just as the experience of the Army Medical Service in this war is going to lead to a wholesomer, sounder physical standard for the civil population, the vast new energies of the Munitions Department are being developed so that they will be fruitful of good in peace. British industry facing the problem of supplying the British and Allied armies in the field with munitions, has found a stimulus in the greatness of the task which will profoundly affect for the good the whole of her manufacturing organisation when peace returns.

Somebody has said that the production of sulphuric acid is the best gauge of a nations' manufacturing greatness. Urged on by war needs, Great Britain produces now 15 times the quantity of sulphuric acid that she produced in 1914. The manufacture of potash for glass, of chemical manures, of optical glass, of steel, of spelter, of aluminium—all these

have grown enormously and the benefit of the growth will be reaped after the war is over. Perhaps more valuable than all, the immense manufacturing tasks undertaken have led to a very practical and sympathetic research into conditions affecting the welfare of labour. It was impossible to secure the degree of effort involved from the working population by any "slave-driving" methods. Careful study of the human element in industry became necessary. A strange bye-product of the most savage and deadly war waged in the history of mankind will be a higher degree of social organisation for betterment of labour conditions.

The difficulties which the Munitions Supply Department had to face at the outset were enormous. There were, considered in the light of the needs of this war, practically no shells, no guns, no machinery for making them. Essential material was lacking in many cases and the only source of quick supply was Germany, which alone in the world had organised for war. But all difficulties were overcome until to-day the British Army is the best equipped and the best supplied of all in the field. How great the growth some comparative figures will show. The production of high explosive in 1914 was almost negligible. The year's supply would not keep the guns of to-day going for a single week. In 1915 we began to produce high explosive on a large scale and in amounts which made the 1914 output seem contemptible, but still

in quite inadequate quantities. In 1916 we had increased the 1915 amount sevenfold. In 1917 we had increased that 1916 amount fourfold. From March 1915 to March 1917 the increase was twenty-eight fold. Of machine guns we made samples in 1914 and we began to manufacture quantities in 1915. In 1917 we made twenty times as many as in 1915. Of aeroplanes the figures mounted in steep flights. In 1916 we seemed to be producing vastly. In 1917 the rate of production for the first six months had increased fourfold as compared with the previous year and another great acceleration was in progress. To-day the Munitions Department of the British Government is the responsible employer of 2,000,000 people. It has to study economies in production; its little economies saved £43,000,000 in 1917 comparing production costs in that year with production costs in 1916!

*   *   *   *

At whatever point it is regarded the British Army effort in defence of humane civilisation is so vast as to be awe-inspiring. From the work of the soldier in the trenches back to that of the women at the benches, it shows an heroic degree of energy and devotion and self denial. Terrible the tragedy which has made the effort necessary, but sublime the courage which has made the effort successful; and successful it stands to-day without a doubt.

A DIARY OF EVENTS.

(This is not intended to be a complete diary of the war but only events of the war in which the British Army took a direct part: so it does not note other events unless they are of outstanding importance.)

1914.

Aug. 3—Belgium, her neutrality threatened by Germany, appeals to Great Britain. British Army mobilised. British ultimatum to Germany.

„ 4—Great Britain declares war on Germany.

„ 8—British and French invade Togoland (Africa).

„ 9—British land in France.

„ 10—Germans give up Swakopmund and Luderitz Bay (Africa).

„ 20—Germans attack in Uganda (Africa).

„ 23—Battle of Mons. British on left wing of Allied Force fell back.

„ 24—Japan enters war on our side. British retreat continues on Western Front.

„ 25—British rear-guard actions covering retreat Western Front.

British and French invade Cameroons (Africa).

„ 26—Battle of Le Cateau.

„ 27—Togoland surrenders.

British success against German cavalry on Oise.

Aug. 28—British (New Zealanders) capture German Samoa.
British attack Garua (Cameroons).

„ 30—Retreat continued on Western Front.
Nsanakong (Cameroons) occupied by British.

Sept. 3—British retreat reaches line of Marne.

„ 6—Battle of Marne begins. French-British forces advancing.
British reverse at Nsanakong.
British success Tsavo (E. Africa).

„ 8—British and French push back German Army.
British (S. African Union) attack German S.W. Africa.
Rebellion in South Africa of pro-German Boers.

„ 10—Battle Marne ends. Victory for French-British forces.

„ 11—British (Australians) seize New Pomerania (Pacific).

„ 12—British success Kisi (E. Africa).

„ 13—French-British attempt passage of Aisne.
British seize Bismarck Islands (Pacific).

„ 15—Germans defeated Raman's Drift (S. Africa).

„ 18—Trench warfare begins Western Front.
British occupy Luderitz Bay (Africa).

„ 22—British Airmen help Belgian Army.
British Naval Division operating on Belgian Coast.
British troops arrive to aid Japanese at Kiao-Chau (German fortress in China).

„ 24—Last of German colonies in South Pacific surrenders.

Sept. 25—British reverse Sandfontein (S. Africa).
British capture Duala (Cameroons).

Oct. 1—Germans driven back from Gazi (E. Africa).

„ 3—Transfer of British front from Aisne to Flanders.

„ 4—British Naval Division goes to Antwerp.

„ 8—British troops retire from Antwerp.

„ 9—"The rush for Coast," British troops advancing from Ostend towards Menin.

„ 15—S. African rebels defeated.

„ 19—British front fixed in Flanders. First Indian Division arrives Western front.

„ 21—First battle of Ypres begins.

„ 25—S. African rebels defeated.

„ 26—British-French force takes Duala (Cameroons).

„ 27—British line falls back at Ypres.

„ 31—British line further driven back at Ypres.
French aid to British front.

Nov. 1—Messines Ridge captured by Germans.
Turkey enters war on side of Germany.

„ 4—British reverse Tânga (E. Africa).

„ 5—British line at Ypres consolidated.
Kiao-Chau falls.
British land in Mesopotamia.
S. African rebels defeated.

„ 11—Great Battle at Ypres; the line held.
S. African rebels defeated.
Fighting in Mesopotamia.

„ 17—First Battle of Ypres ends.
Turks defeated Mesopotamia.
Germans evacuate Longido (E. Africa .

Nov. 21—Fighting near Suez Canal.
Basra (Mesopotamia) captured).
Dec. 1—De Wet, S. African rebel leader surrenders.
„ 7—British success Meyera (Mesopotamia).
„ 8—Kurna (E. Africa) captured.
„ 17—Egypt become British Protectorate.

1915.

Jan. 12—British occupy Raman's Drift (S. Africa).
„ 14—British occupy Swakopmund (S.W. Africa).
„ 18—Jassin (E. Africa) lost.
„ 19—German air raid on England.
„ 22—British air attack on Zeebrugge.
S. African rebels defeated.
„ 26—British-French advance in Cameroons.
Turks take Katiyeh near Suez Canal.
„ 31—Turks attack Suez Canal.
Feb. 3—Turks defeated, pursued across Suez Canal.
S. African rebellion ends.
„ 11—British air attack on Zeebrugge.
„ 17—Germany declares Blockade of Great Britain.
„ 19—British-French Naval attack on Dardanelles.
„ 21—Turks driven from Akaba (Red Sea).
Fighting in S.W. Africa.
March 8—Germans defeated Mora River (E. Africa).
„ 10—Battle of Neuve Chapelle.
„ 14—Battle of St. Eloi.
„ 18—Naval attack on Dardanelles fails.
„ 19—Germans defeated E. Africa.

A Diary of Events

Mar. 21—Turks attack Suez Canal: are defeated.
April 2—Successes S.W. Africa.
„ 13—Successes Mesopotamia.
„ 20—Further successes S.W. Africa.
„ 22—Second Battle of Ypres. Poison gas used by Germans.
Canadians help to hold the line.
„ 25—British troops landed Gallipoli.
„ 26—Heavy fighting Ypres and Gallipoli.
„ 27—British positions Gallipoli consolidated.
„ 28—British attack Turks at Krithia (Gallipoli).
Fighting near Suez Canal.
Germans defeated at Gibeon (S. Africa).
May 2—German gas attack Ypres.
„ 3—British fall back slightly at Ypres.
General Botha occupies Karibib (S. Africa).
„ 7—*Lusitania* torpedoed.
„ 8—Fresh German attack Ypres.
Heavy fighting, Krithia.
„ 9—British line, Ypres, slightly withdrawn.
Turkish attack, Krithia.
General Botha occupies Windhoek (S.Africa)
„ 12—Slight British advance Gallipoli.
„ 16—British attack at Festubert.
„ 18—Turks attack, Gallipoli.
„ 23—Italy enters the war on our side.
„ 24—German gas attack, Western Front.
„ 26—Battle Festubert ends.
„ 30—Capture of Sphinxhaven (Africa).
„ 31—Zeppelin raid on London.
Turks defeated near Ahwaz.

June 3—Capture of Amara (Mesopotamia).
„ 4—Zeppelin raid on England.
Heavy fighting at Krithia and Achi-Baba.
„ 7—Zeppelin brought down by aeroplane in England.
11—Garua (Cameroons) surrenders.
Heavy fighting, Gallipoli.
„ 15—Heavy fighting, Festubert.
, 21—British-French advance, Gallipoli.
, 25—Lome (Cameroons) surrender. Germans defeated, Bukoba (E. Africa).
, 28—British attack Gallipoli.
Germans attack Abercorn (Rhodesia).
29—Ngaundere (Cameroons) surrenders.
Turkish attacks, Gallipoli.
July 1—Turkish attacks, Gallipoli repulsed.
Surrender Otavifontein (S.W. Africa).
„ 4—Germans defeated, Gaub (S.W. Africa.).
„ 6—British success, Pilkhem (Western Front).
S. African Union raises Imperial contingent.
„ 9—German S.W. Africa completely conquered.
„ 12—Fighting, Krithia.
„ 14—Fighting, Mesopotamia.
„ 17—Bulgaria makes secret treaty with Germany.
„ 21—British success at Hooge (Western Front).
„ 23—British occupy Nasiriyeh (Mesopotamia).
„ 30—Germans use liquid fire at Hooge.
Aug. 1—Germans defeated in Rhodesia.
„ 6—Great attack, Gallipoli, landing at Suvla Bay.
„ 7—Heavy fighting Gallipoli. Slight successes.

Aug. 8—Battle for Achi Baba (Gallipoli) continues.
„ 9—Heavy fighting Gallipoli. British repulsed after a first success.
British sucess, Hooge.
Zeppelin raid on England.
„ 10—Turkish successes, Gallipoli.
„ 12—Zeppelin raid on England.
„ 13—Zeppelin raid on England.
„ 22—Attack at Suvla Bay abandoned.
„ 27—British seize Hill 60.
Sept. 7—Zeppelin raid on England.
„ 8—Zeppelin raid on England.
„ 23—British-French offensive, Western front.
„ 25—General Townshend reaches Kut-el-Amara (Mesopotamia).
British capture Loos.
„ 28—British-French offensive Western Front dies down.
„ 29—British capture Kut with 2,000 prisoners.
Oct. 4—German attacks, British Western Front.
„ 5—British and Allied troops land at Salonika.
„ 8—German attacks British Western Front.
„ 9—Wumliaga (Cameroons) captured.
„ 11—Bulgaria attacks Serbia.
„ 12—Bulgaria enters war as ally of Germany.
„ 13—British successes Western Front.
Zeppelin raid on London.
„ 14—Great Britain declares war on Bulgaria.
„ 16—Miss Edith Cavell judicially murdered by Germans.

Oct. 16—Advance of Allied troops from Salonika.
Nov. 4—Heavy fighting Gallipoli.
,, 21—Tibati (Cameroons) occupied.
,, 22—Battle at Ctesiphon (Mesopotamia.)
,, 25—Salonika ceded by Greece as base for allies in Balkans.
,, 28—Germany announces completion campaign against Serbia.
Dec. 1—General Townshend retires from Ctesiphon to Kut.
,, 4—Further British forces landed at Salonika.
,, 7—British retire from Strumnitza (Balkans).
,, 13—British-French Balkan forces retire to Salonika position.
Arab force defeated in West Egypt.
,, 15—Sir Douglas Haig appointed Commander in Chief British Force in France.
,, 19—Successful withdrawal from Gallipoli. No losses.
,, 21—Sir Wm. Robertson appointed Chief of Imperial Staff.
,, 25—Turkish attack repulsed at Kut.
Arab forces defeated West Egypt.
,, 31—Total British casualties (all fronts) to date 528,227.

1916.

Jan. 1—Yaunde, capital German Cameroons captured.
,, 2—Fighting at Kut.
,, 7—Heavy Fighting at Kut.
,, 8—Complete evacuation Gallipoli Peninsula.

A Diary of Events

Jan. 12—Turks invest Kut.
,, 21—Fighting to relieve Kut.
,, 23—German air raid on England.
Defeat of Senussi (West Egypt).
Compulsory Military Service Bill passed by British Commons.
,, 28—German attack Loos repulsed.
,, 31—Zeppelin raid on England: heavy casualties.
Feb. 5—Turkish success on Tigris.
,, 9—General Smuts appointed E. African Command.
,, 14—German attacks at Ypres.
18—Surrender German Cameroons complete.
,, 26—Senussis routed.
March 5—Zeppelin raid on England.
,, 7—Advance on Kilimanjaro (E. Africa).
,, 9—Battle to relieve Kut: unsuccessful.
,, 10—Portugal enters war on our side.
,, 11—Successes in E. Africa.
,, 13—Moshi (E. Africa) occupied.
,, 14—Sollum captured from Senussi.
,, 19—German aeroplane raid on England: one raider brought down.
,, 21—Kut relief force falls back.
,, 27—Small British success at St. Eloi.
,, 31—Zeppelin raid on England.
April 1—Zeppelin captured on Thames.
,, 2—Zeppelin raid on Scotland.
,, 5—Battle in attempt to relieve Kut.

April 7—Fighting at St. Eloi. Slight German success.
" 9—British attack on Turks at Sanna-i-yat fails.
" 14—Fighting in attempt to relieve Kut.
" 18—Turkish success on Tigris.
" 22—Successes in E. Africa.
" 23—Turkish success on Tigris.
" 24—Attempt to re-victual Kut fails.
" 29—Kut falls to Turks.
May 2—Zeppelin raid on England: one Zeppelin destroyed.
" 8—"Anzac" troops arrive in France.
" 13—German attack Ploegsteert (Flanders).
" 15—Heavy Fighting Western Front.
" 16—Turks defeated Sinai Peninsula.
" 18—German success Vimy Ridge.
" 19—British success on Tigris.
" 20—Vimy Ridge loss partly made good.
" 22—Progress on Tigris.
" 23—British occupy El Fasha (Soudan).
" 29—German E. Africa invaded from Rhodesia and Nyasaland.
" 31—Naval Battle of Jutland.
June 2—Success at Katia (W. Egypt).
Heavy Fighting Ypres Salient.
" 5—General Lord Kitchener drowned.
" 12—Sir Percy Sykes enters Kerman (S. Persia).
" 13—Heavy Fighting Western Front.
Wilhelmsthal, capital German E. Africa occupied.

A Diary of Events

June 21—Grand Shereef of Mecca revolts against Turkey.

„ 22—Fighting La Bassée.

„ 25—British attack Western Front.

July 1—Anglo-French offensive on Somme. Germans driven back.

„ 2—Battle of the Somme continued. British successes.

„ 3—Somme advance continues.

„ 10—Somme advance continues. Contalmaison falls.

Announced that German front line on Somme captured on front of eight miles: 7,500 prisoners taken.

„ 14—British attack second German line on Somme.

„ 15—British cavalry in action on Somme.

„ 20—Further British advance on Somme.

„ 25—Pozières falls. Somme advance continues.

Aug. 4—Unsuccessful Turkish attack Egypt.

„ 5—Advance of General Smuts E. Africa.

„ 9—Pursuit of Turks, Egypt.

„ 16—Further advance on the Somme.

„ 20—Allied offensive on Salonika front. General Sarrail in Command of Allied Forces.

„ 22—Bulgarians defeated at Doiran by British and Serbians.

„ 24—Zeppelin raid on London.

„ 26—Mrogoro (E. Africa) occupied.

„ 21—Roumania enters war on our side.

Sept. 3—Further progress on Somme.

Sept. 3—Zeppelin raid on England. One Zeppelin brought down.
,, 5—Further successes on Somme.
,, 8—Guillemont and Ginchy captured.
,, 9—British cross Struma and attack Bulgars.
,, 15—Further big advance on Somme. First appearance of "the Tank."
,, 21—British line of Somme again advanced.
,, 23—Zeppelin raid on England. Two Zeppelins brought down.
,, 25—Further advance on Somme.
Zeppelin raid on England.
,, 26—Thiepval (Somme) captured.
Oct. 1—Further successes on Somme. Captures since July 1st, 588 officers, 26,147 rank and file, 121 guns, 103 trench mortars, 396 machine guns.
,, Zeppelin raid on England. One Zeppelin brought down.
,, 2—Bulgarian attacks on British at Struma repulsed.
,, 7—Le Sars (Somme) captured.
,, 21—Further advance on Somme.
Nov. 3—Successes E. Africa.
,, 5—Further advance on Somme.
,, 6—German counter attacks on Somme.
,, 10—Heavy Air fighting, Western front.
,, 13—Battle of Ancre opens. Great British successes.
Conquest Darfur (Soudan) completed.
Beersheba attacked by our air forces.
,, 15—Battle of Ancre, 5,678 German prisoners.

Nov. 16—Raid on Indian Frontier beaten off.
„ 17—Heavy Fighting on Ancre.
„ 18—Monastir re-captured.
British front on Ancre advanced.
Success Lupembe, E. Africa.
„ 27—Zeppelin raid on England—two Zeppelins destroyed.
„ 28—Aeroplane raid on London.
Dec. 1—Allied troops land at Athens.
Surrender of a German column, E. Africa.
„ 3—Reconstruction British Cabinet, Mr. Lloyd George, Prime Minister.
„ 12—German Peace offer.
„ 14—Statement Allies, Peace terms: "Adequate reparation, adequate security."
„ 14 Our offensive resumed on Tigris.
„ 15—Great French victory Verdun.
Advance on Tigris.
„ 22—El Arish (Egypt) re-captured from Turks.
„ 23—Further successes against Turks, Egypt.
Fighting Macedonian Front.
Fighting near Kut.
„ 25—British take over further section of French Front.
„ 26—British armoured cars help to repulse attacks Roumanian front.

1917.

Jan. 1 Allies give firm refusal to German proposals for inconclusive peace.
Sir Douglas Haig promoted Field Marshal.
Good progress E. Africa.
„ 4—Progress reported on Tigris.

Jan. 8—Germans closely pursued in E. Africa.
,, 9—Successful Indian Division attack on Tigris.
,, 10—Revival British activity, Western Front.
,, 11—British "Victory War Loan" opened.
,, 14—Further British progress on Tigris.
,, 20—Turkish defeat on Tigris.
Germans further pushed back E. Africa.
General Smuts gives up command there to General Hoskins.
,, 25—Turkish defeat Tigris.
,, 26—Turkish attack Tigris. At first successful then beaten off.
,, 27—Successful action Le Transloy (Somme).
Further successes on Tigris.
Feb. 1—German announcement that British hospital ships will be torpedoed in British Channel and North Sea.
Further successes on Tigris.
,, 2—German announcement unrestricted submarine piracy to prevent all sea traffic in certain areas.
,, 3—United States breaks off diplomatic relations with Germany.
, 6—British Front advanced on Somme.
,, 7—British capture Grandcourt (Somme).
,, 8—Further advance on Somme.
,, 10—British victory at Serre (Somme).
Victory at Kut. Town almost surrounded.
Feb. 11—Progress on Somme continues.
Turks hemmed in at Kut

Feb. 12—Cost of war to Great Britain now £5,790,000 a day.

,, 14—Progress on Ancre.

,, 16—Turkish defeat on Tigris. Many prisoners taken.

,, 17—British gain on Ancre.
Unsuccessful attack on Turks at Sanna-i-yat (Tigris).

,, 20—Successful operations against Turks in Sinai.

,, 22—Success against Turks at Sanna-i-yat.

,, 23—Further progress on Somme and Ancre.
Victory at Sanna-i-yat.

,, 25—German retreat on Ancre.
Kut falls Turks in full retreat.

,, 26—Great British advance on Somme.

,, 27—Announced that British War Loan had raised over £1,000,000,000 new money.
German retreat on Somme continues.

,, 28—German retreat on Somme and Ancre continues.
Turkish retreat on Tigris continues.

,, 29—Germans admit retreat on Somme and Ancre; further British advance.

March 4—Further advance Somme; announcement of extension of British line 16 miles south of Somme.

,, 5—Turkish rearguard engaged 27 miles from Bagdad.

,, 6—Overseas Dominions representatives attend War Cabinet.
Further advance on Ancre.

March 6—Advance against Turks in Syria.
Advance on Tigris passes Ctesiphon.

,, 11—British Army occupies Bagdad.
Further advance on Ancre.

,, 13—Germans surrender to British main Bapaume Ridge.
Pursuit Turkish Army 30 miles beyond Bagdad continues.

,, 14—China breaks off diplomatic relations with Germany.
Advance on Somme continues.
Revolution in Russia.

,, 15—British line on Salonika front advanced.
Advance on Somme continues.

,, 16—Advances on Somme and Tigris continued.

,, 17—Bapaume entered by British.
Pursuit of Turks along Tigris.

,, 18—Peronne entered by British. General German retreat on Somme.
Bakuba captured on Tigris (33 miles N.E. Bagdad).

,, 19—Forty villages recaptured on Somme.

,, 20—Further advance on Somme.
Imperial War Cabinet meets for first time.
British Hospital ship *Asturias* torpedoed.

,, 21—Further advance on Somme.

,, 22—German resistance on Somme stiffens.

,, 24—Further advance on Somme.

,, 26—Announced that we hold now 55,397 German and 15,512 Turkish prisoners.

,, 27—British Cavalry advance East of Peronne.
Advance on Balkan front.

A Diary of Events

Mar. 27—Turks defeated in Palestine with heavy losses.

„ 30—Further advance Western Front.
Further successes on Tigris reported.

April 2—Advance Western Front continues.
Deli Abbas (Mesopotamia) occupied.

„ 3—United States declares War on Germany.
British advance Western Front continues.

„ 8—Great Air battles Western Front.

„ 9—Battle of Arras; Great British successes.
Vimy Ridge captured.

„ 10—Battle of Arras continued. We take over 11,000 prisoners.

„ 11—Heavy snow checks Battle of Arras: British advance continues.

„ 12—British advance East of Arras continued.
Prisoners captured now over 13,000, guns captured 166.
British victory over Turks on Tigris.

„ 13—German counter-attacks, Battle of Arras, defeated.

„ 15—Pursuit of Turks along Tigris.

„ 17—British advance Western Front continued.
British attack Gaza near (Palestine).

„ 18—British advance Western Front continued.
Turks defeated on Tigris, many prisoners taken.

„ 19—Turks again defeated on Tigris.
Turks defeated in Palestine.
British advance Western Front.

„ 23—Fresh successes in Battle of Arras.
Advance against Turks on the Tigris continues.

April 23—Samarra Railway station occupied.
„ 24—Stubborn German counter-attacks Battle of Arras; British advance continues.
British fighting on Balkan front; some gains.
„ 26—Turkish retreat along Tigris continued.
British hold advanced Balkan Front against counter-attacks.
„ 28—British gains Western Front.
„ 29—Further British gains Western Front.
May 1—Announced that our April capture of German prisoners was 19,343.
Continued successes on Tigris.
Fighting on N.W. frontier of India.
Successful patrol actions at Gaza.
„ 3—Battle of Arras continued; German "Hindenburg line" breached.
„ 4—Battle of Arras. Stubborn German resistance.
„ 8—Battle of Arras. German success at Fresnoy.
Fighting Balkan Front.
„ 11—Heavy counter-attacks by Germans Western Front; British positions held.
„ 12—Zeebrugge bombarded from sea and air.
British advance Western Front.
Heavy Fighting Balkan Front.
„ 14—Roeux captured.
British advance Balkan Front.
„ 17—Bullecourt captured.
Balkan gains consolidated.
„ 20—British advance Western Front.

May 24—Italians acknowledge help of British artillery on the Southern Carso.

„ 27—German air raid on S.E. Coast, heavy casualties.

Germany announces she will sink hospital ships in Mediterranean.

„ 29—Announcement that remaining German troops in East Africa had broken out and scattered.

June 1—Our May captures of German prisoners announced as 3,412.

„ 3—British air offensive in Flanders.

„ 5—German air raid on S.E. coast; 10 German aeroplanes brought down.

„ 6—Battle of Arras, further British gains.

„ 7—Battle of Messines. Great British victory. Over 6,400 prisoners taken.

„ 8—General Pershing Commander-in-Chief U.S.A. Expeditionary Force arrives in London.

„ 9—German counter-attacks Messines fail.

„ 11—British push on from Messines Ridge.

„ 12—Further advance from Messines.

„ 13—Total British captures since June 7th announced 7,342 prisoners, 47 guns.

German aeroplane raid on London. Heavy casualties.

„ 14—Germans retiring from before Messines. British advance in front of Arras.

„ 15—Further British advance in front of Messines and Arras.

„ 17—Zeppelin attack on E. Coast. One Zeppelin destroyed.

The British Army at War

June 18—Heavy fighting Western Front: slight German success.

British withdrawal from East of Struma, Balkan Front.

„ 20—British re-take positions lost on Western Front June 18.

Situation in Mesopotamia reported quiet.

Fighting in E. Africa. A German detachment dispersed.

„ 25—British advance on Souchez River.

Sucessful operations on N.W. India frontier.

„ 26—Further British advance on Western Front.

M. Venizelos Prime Minister of Greece.

„ 27—U.S.A. troops arrive in France.

„ 28—Further British advance Western Front.

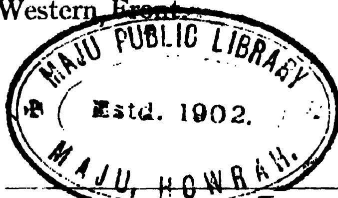
„ 30—Advance Western Front continues: Avion taken.

July 1—Our June captures announced: German prisoners 8,686, German guns 67 (and 102 trench mortars and 345 machine guns).

Since Aug. 4th, 1914, British Army has captured 117,776 prisoners (excluding African natives captured fighting with Germany).

Since Aug. 4th, 1914, British Army has captured 739 guns.

Since April, 1915, British Army has not lost a single gun on the Western Front.

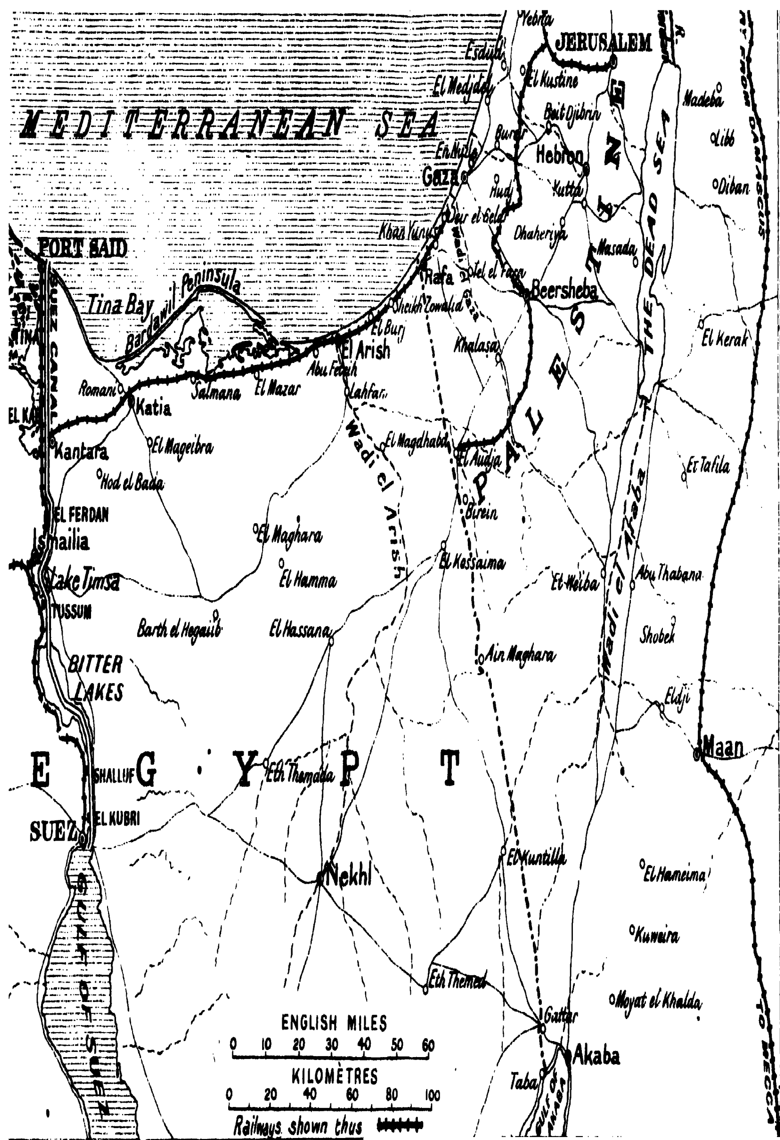


Printed in Great Britain by T. Beaty Hart, Green Lane, Kettering

THE BALKAN FRONT.



THE CAMPAIGN IN EGYPT & PALESTINE.



THE CAMPAIGN IN MESOPOTAMIA.

